Live Out His Love
Experience & Share the Compassion of Jesus for Women

A Study of New Testament Women

Melanie Newton
Jesus Christ treated women as no man had ever treated them before. His warmth, personal attention, tenderness, sound teaching, and compassion toward women were revolutionary. Journey alongside some New Testament women as they experienced His love and care for them—the same love and care He offers to every woman today.

Melanie Newton
We extend our heartfelt thanks to the many women who served as question writers and editors for this study guide—Joan Floyd, Liz Church, Barbie Thrasher, Robin Colley, Ladina Wingert, Sarah Saoit, and Bonnie Slack. Without your help, we would never have accomplished this monumental task in a timely manner.

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Melanie Newton specializes in Lifestyle Disciplemaking training to equip women to share their faith and disciple new believers. She offers Joyful Walk Bible Studies for women on her website: www.melanienewton.com.

We pray that you and your group will find Live Out His Love to be a resource that God will use to strengthen you in your faith walk with Him.
Melanie Newton

Melanie Newton is a Louisiana girl who made the choice to follow Jesus while attending LSU. She and her husband Ron married and moved to Texas for him to attend Dallas Theological Seminary. They stayed in Texas where Ron led a wilderness camping ministry for troubled youth for many years. Ron now helps corporations with their challenging employees and is the author of the top-rated business book, *No Jerks on the Job*.

Melanie jumped into raising three Texas-born children and serving in ministry to women at her church. Through the years, the Lord has given her opportunity to do Bible teaching and to write grace-based Bible studies for women that are now available from her website (melanienewton.com) and on Bible.org. *Graceful Beginnings* books are for anyone new to the Bible. *Joyful Walk Bible Studies* are for maturing Christians.

Melanie is currently a disciplemaking trainer with Joyful Walk Ministries. She equips and encourages Christian women everywhere to pursue a lifestyle of disciplemaking. Her heart’s desire is to encourage you to have a joyful relationship with Jesus Christ so you are willing to share that experience with others around you.

“Jesus took hold of me in 1972, and I’ve been on this great adventure ever since. My life is a gift of God, full of blessings in the midst of difficult challenges. The more I’ve learned and experienced God’s absolutely amazing grace, the more I’ve discovered my faith walk to be a joyful one. I’m still seeking that joyful walk every day…”

Melanie
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- Live Out His Love: New Testament Women
- Radical Acts: Adventure with the Spirit from the Book of Acts
- Knowing Jesus, Knowing Joy: A Study of Philippians
- Healthy Living: A Study of Colossians
- Adorn Yourself with Godliness: A Study of 1 Timothy and Titus
- Perspective: A Study of 1 and 2 Thessalonians
- To Be Found Faithful: A Study of 2 Timothy

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Using This Study Guide

This study guide consists of 12 lessons covering the lives of 16 women in New Testament history. For those who are not familiar with the culture of the New Testament, each lesson begins with a brief “Historical Perspective” of the culture relevant to the lesson.

The lessons are divided into 4 daily sections (about 20 minutes in length). The goal is to help you establish a regular time of study in the Word for 5 days each week, considering your small group session to be one of those days. If you cannot do the entire lesson one week, please read the Bible passage being covered.

The Basic Study

This study guide consists of 12 lessons. If you cannot do the entire lesson one week, please read the Bible passage(s) being covered.

Process of Bible Study: Each lesson includes core questions covering the narrative associated with each woman’s life. These core questions will take you through the process of inductive Bible study—observation, interpretation, and application. The process is more easily understood in the context of answering these questions:

- What does the passage say? (Observation: what’s actually there)
- What does it mean? (Interpretation: the author’s intended meaning) Many of the questions are interpretation questions.
- How does this apply to me today? (Application: making it personal) Live Out His Love questions lead you to introspection and application of a specific truth to your life. At least one of these questions in each lesson will help you learn how to share your faith with others who need to know Jesus or need to know Him better. This is called “Disciplemaking.”

Study Enhancements

Deeper Discoveries (optional): Embedded within the sections are optional questions for further research of subjects we don’t have time to cover adequately in the lessons or contain information that significantly enhance the basic study. If you are meeting with a small group, your leader may give you the opportunity to share your "discoveries."

Study Aids: To aid in proper interpretation and application of the study, additional study aids are located where appropriate in the lesson:

- Historical Insights
- Scriptural Insights
- From the Greek (definitions of Greek words)
- Focus on the Meaning
- Think About It (thoughtful reflection)
Discussion Group Guidelines

1. **Attend consistently** whether your lesson is done or not. You’ll learn from the other women, and they want to get to know you.

2. **Set aside time** to work through the study questions. The goal of Bible study is to **get to know** Jesus. He will change your life.

3. **Share your insights** from your personal study time. As you spend time in the Bible, Jesus will teach you truth through His Spirit inside you.

4. **Respect each other’s insights**. Listen thoughtfully. Encourage each other as you interact. Refrain from dominating the discussion if you have a tendency to be talkative.

5. **Celebrate our unity** in Christ. Avoid bringing up controversial subjects such as politics, divisive issues, and denominational differences.

6. **Maintain confidentiality**. Remember that anything shared during the group time is not to leave the group (unless permission is granted by the one sharing).

7. **Pray for one another** as sisters in Christ.

8. **Get to know the women** in your group. Please do not use your small group members for solicitation purposes for home businesses, though.

New Testament Insights

During the exile from their homeland (605-538 BC), the people of Israel living in Babylonian territory (modern Iraq) were cut off from the temple and surrounded by pagan religious practices, so they focused on what they had retained—the Law (the first five books of the Bible, also known as the Pentateuch or the Torah) and the belief that they were still God's people. Personal piety and prayer replaced the sacrifices now denied to them. The new center of worship became the local synagogue (similar to a church community). As a result, Judaism became a faith that could be practiced wherever the Torah could be carried. This helped to preserve Judaism but also prepared the way for the Christian gospel. The Diaspora (dispersion) of Israel begun in the exile, accelerated during the years that followed so that by Jesus' time Jews filled every land and sea. Jews living outside the land of Israel concentrated their religious life in the study of the Torah and the life of the synagogue. The missionaries of the early church began their outreach ministries among the Diaspora, using the Greek translation of the Old Testament. Within many Jewish synagogue congregations were “God-fearing” Gentiles (anyone who was not a Jew)—those who believed in the Jewish God and followed the Law to some extent but not fully.

After the exile, Israel ceased to be an independent nation and became a minor territory in a succession of larger empires—Babylonian, Persian, Greek, and Roman. The rulers were often ruthless against the Jews and continually tried to force idolatry on the Jewish people. When Rome took over in 63 BC, the conquering general massacred priests in the performance of their duties and entered the Most Holy Place. This atrocity began Roman rule in a way that Jews could neither forgive nor forget! Herod, a non-Jew, was appointed king by the Roman Senate in 40 BC, but he was subject to Rome.

During this time period, a religious group later known as the Pharisees formed to keep Israel pure from idolatry, promoting the keeping of the Law as the only way that the Jews would be able to live righteously before God in a world that had changed drastically since the days of Moses. Though few in number, they enjoyed the support of the people and were the only party to survive the destruction of the temple in AD 70, thus being the spiritual progenitors of modern Judaism.
New Testament Summary

The New Testament opens with the births of John and Jesus. About 30 years later, John challenged the Jews to indicate their repentance (turning from sin and toward God) by submitting to water baptism—a familiar Old Testament practice used for repentance as well as when a Gentile converted to Judaism (to be washed clean of idolatry).

Jesus, God’s incarnate Son, publicly showed the world what God is like and taught His perfect ways for 3 – 3½ years. After preparing 12 disciples to continue Christ’s earthly work, He died voluntarily on a cross for mankind’s sin, rose from the dead, and returned to heaven. The account of His earthly life is recorded in 4 books known as the Gospels (the biblical books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John named after the compiler of each account).

After Jesus’ return to heaven, the followers of Christ were then empowered by the Holy Spirit and spread God’s salvation message among the Jews, a number of whom believed in Christ. The apostle Paul and others carried the good news to the Gentiles during 3 missionary journeys (much of this recorded in the book of Acts). Paul wrote 13 New Testament letters to churches & individuals (Romans through Philemon). The section in our Bible from Hebrews to Jude contains 8 additional letters penned by five men, including two apostles (Peter and John) and two of Jesus’ half-brothers (James and Jude). The author of Hebrews is unknown. The apostle John also recorded Revelation, which summarizes God’s final program for the world. The Bible ends as it began—with a new, sinless creation.

New Testament Timeline

No one is certain of the dates of Jesus’ birth or death so the years given below are best guesses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historical Period</th>
<th>Years AD</th>
<th>Woman Studied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jesus’ Lifetime &amp; Ministry</td>
<td>6 BC – 30 AD</td>
<td>Samaritan Woman, Immoral Woman, Adulterous Woman</td>
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<td>Sick Woman &amp; Dead Girl, Canaanite Woman</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Crippled Woman, Widow of Nain, Mary &amp; Martha</td>
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<td>Mary Magdalene, Mary the Mother of Jesus</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Early Church</td>
<td>30 – 65 AD</td>
<td>Tabitha, Lydia, Phoebe, Priscilla</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Israel’s Political and Religious Authorities

- **Rome**
  - [defense, taxes, criminal courts]

- **Jews**
  - [religious & civil matters]

- **Sanhedrin**
  - [71 elders]

- **Sadducees**
  - comfortable compromisers
  - politicians, merchants
  - materialists, >20,000

- **Chief Priests**
  - elected
  - ordained
  - temple officers

- **Scribes**
  - affluent academics
  - interpreted Mosaic Law
  - “secrecy” and pride

- **Pharisees**
  - pompous perfectionists
  - Mosaic Law=oral traditions
  - pride and scorn, ~6000
Live Out His Love

The Lord Jesus demonstrated in His life on earth how much He loved and valued women. He taught, forgave, accepted, and gave new life to them. Because His care for them was so countercultural to what they had previously known, women responded with love for Him and a desire to serve Him. Many of them had walks of faith that brought challenges as well as times of joy. They focused on following Jesus and serving Him in their daily lives, sharing His love with others so they could benefit from Jesus’ great love for women, also. Jesus Christ entered into the midst of their lives, visibly representing God to them, loving them dearly, and changing their lives forever! He does the same for you and me today.

Today, many women like you and I are longing for more direction in our walks of faith than attending a weekly Bible study and the annual Christmas brunch. That longing is a desire put in our hearts by God’s Spirit to fulfill the purpose we have while on earth serving the Lord Jesus in our daily lives. That purpose is to live for Him, experience His love for us, and share His love with others around us.

Jesus is calling us! His commission to His followers to share the good news about Him with others is given to everyday people like you and I are, to be fulfilled in the everyday world in which each of us “lives and moves and has our being” (Acts 17:28). Since Jesus is the one calling you to join Him on mission every day, then He will enable you to do what He asks you to do. Learn from Him how to make disciples. And, it might even be fun!

My heart’s desire is to encourage you through this study to have an authentic, loving relationship with Jesus Christ for yourself so that you are willing to share that experience with others around you.

Just relax, trust in Him, and begin an adventure that will transform your life and others as well. Are you ready for adventure? It’s going to be a great journey. And, I’m so glad to be walking beside you!

Melanie
Lesson 1: A Samaritan Woman

Time Period: Jesus’ First Year of Ministry, ~27 AD

Historical Perspective: Connecting with New Testament Women

If you have limited knowledge of the New Testament, those women who lived so long ago may be strangers to you. When you read the gospels, you can easily think, “What’s written in it happened so long ago! What do those women have in common with me? They didn’t live in my world.” Yet, they were still women like you and I are.

As everyday women, they cooked meals, did laundry, and raised children. They had responsibilities inside and outside of their homes, including home businesses. They experienced hormone fluctuations and menopause. They laughed with their friends, differed with their mates, and cried when a loved one died. I bet they all found ways to use their 20,000 words per day. 😊 At one time, they were 20-somethings, then 40-somethings, then 60-somethings and more. They wore beads, earrings, and ankle bracelets. Their hair needed to be combed and fixed, and it turned grey as they aged. No doubt, some of them, if not all, had something on their bodies that sagged!

These women also experienced fear at various times just like we do. They faced rejection from peers, sick family members, and disappointments. They faced trauma and surprise houseguests. They even had “bad” days when things didn’t go right, sometimes due to their own choices. These were everyday women, just like we are. Their stories—snippets of their biographies—are preserved for us to get to know them.

Life for Women in Jesus’ Time (see more information on page 11)

What was it like to be a woman living around the rim of the Mediterranean during Jesus’ time? Imagine a time when a man was commended because he killed his wife for appearing in public without her veil and when a Roman woman’s rights were completely subject to her father’s power. If she married, then those rights, even the power of life and death, were transferred to her husband. Think of what it would have been like to bear and raise a son who would receive more esteem from his father and the rest of society than you would as his mother.

In both Greek and Roman cultures, women held a second-rate status. Their legal rights were practically nonexistent. In fact, only a husband could petition for a divorce. In such a society, permissive polygamy was considered normal—for men. The owning of multiple women was an indication of wealth. Needless to say, such a practice only further relegated women to an inferior position since they were treated like property, a mere commodity to indicate status or position. Jewish women fared only slightly better than their contemporaries in surrounding cultures. A married woman with children did hold a certain place of honor as a wife and mother, but even that position was tied to her ability to produce male children. Because of a twisted interpretation of the Mosaic Law, the rabbinical leaders taught that women were uneducable. They were considered unreliable as courtroom witnesses. Women were even held responsible for the lustful temptations men suffered.

As the radical rabbi, Jesus treated women as no man had ever treated them before. His warmth, personal attention, tenderness, sound teaching, and compassion toward women were revolutionary. He openly demonstrated His love for each individual He met—both men and women—for whom He would ultimately die.
Day One Study
Read the Historical Perspective in the box above, then…


2. Read John 4:1-6. What information do you glean from vv. 1-3?

**Historical Insight:** To go through Samaria “was the shortest route from Judea to Galilee but not the only way. The other route was through Perea, east of the Jordan River...In Jesus’ day, the Jews, because of their hatred for the Samaritans, normally took the eastern route in order to avoid Samaria.” (Walvoord and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*, pp. 284-285.)

3. In light of these verses and the Historical Insight above, why would Jesus travel through Samaria?

4. **Deeper Discoveries (optional):** Use a commentary, study notes or the internet to answer this: Why was there such animosity between the Jews and the Samaritans? What were the social consequences of traveling through Samaria?
Day Two Study

5. Read John 4:4-26. Describe the Samaritan woman through what is revealed about her in this text).

**Historical Insight:** “A Rabbinic law of AD 66 stated that Samaritan women were considered as continually menstruating and thus unclean. Therefore, a Jew who drank from a Samaritan woman’s vessel would become ceremonially unclean…The normal prejudices of the day prohibited public conversation between men and women, between Jews and Samaritans, and especially between strangers. A Jewish Rabbi would rather go thirsty than violate these proprieties.” (Walvoord and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*, p. 285.)

6. How did Jesus begin a relationship with this woman?

**Scriptural Insight:** “Jesus being truly human, experienced thirst, weariness, pain, and hunger” as well as “all the attributes of Deity” (all-knowing and all-powerful). (Walvoord and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*, page 285.)


- What does the phrase "living water" symbolize?

- What does the word "drink" symbolize?

- Therefore, what is Jesus saying to her?

- How does she respond?
8. **Live Out His Love**: What do/did you seek to satisfy your built-in spiritual thirst? If our God created us with a spiritual thirst for a relationship with Him (as the Bible declares), can a relationship with another human satisfy that thirst? Explain your answer.

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**Day Three Study**


10. How and why does the Samaritan woman change the subject in vv. 19-26?

11. How does Jesus use her detour to declare truth about worship and about Himself?

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**From the Greek**: The title “Christ” given to Jesus is from the Greek word *christos*, a translation of the Hebrew term “Messiah” meaning “anointed one.” The Old Testament prophets promised that the Messiah, as the anointed one of God, would come and do many wonderful things for God’s people, including restoring God’s Kingdom on earth. Christians are followers of Jesus, who is the Christ.
12. What similarities do you find between this conversation & Jesus’ conversation w/ Nicodemus (Day One Study)?

Day Four Study
13. Read John 4:27-42. How did the Samaritan woman initially respond to Jesus and his invitation to her (verses 27-30)?

14. What does Jesus say to get His disciples on board with His mission in Samaria (verses 31-38)?

15. How did this woman’s new faith in Jesus impact her peers? What did they urge Jesus to do?

16. Read John 3:16-17; John 6:38,40 and John 14:9. Who did Jesus say He is and for what reason had He come?

17. Live Out His Love: If you have not made the decision to believe that Jesus is who He says He is—God’s Son—and that by believing you have eternal life through trusting in Him, you can put your trust in Him today and experience His love for you right away. If you do this, tell someone. If you are still unsure, ask Jesus to reveal Himself through the truth of His Word. Ask someone to meet with you and answer questions you might have.
18. **Live Out His Love**: Have you already trusted in Jesus to be your Savior? Think about your story of following Jesus and answer the questions below that fit your experience.

- **If you trusted in Jesus as a teen or an adult…**
  What was life like for you before knowing Jesus? What triggered your need for Jesus? What did God use to draw you to Him? That may be how God will use you to reach others.

- **If you trusted in Jesus as a child, then drifted away from Him but later returned …**
  What did God use to draw you back to Him? That may be how God will use you to reach others for Christ.

- **If you trusted in Jesus as a child and kept faithful to Him choosing while a teen or young adult to follow Him as a disciple …**
  What kept you faithful? What did God use to keep you drawn to Himself? [Note: Every parent wants this for their child.]

**Think About It:** Consider the disciples’ behavior in this incident (v. 27). Do you allow racial, cultural or religious barriers to keep you from sharing Jesus’ love with other people? Consider what life is like for those around you who have not experienced His love yet. Ask Jesus to give you love for them and to help you understand what they are feeling and needing from Him. Stepping into their lives to build intentional friendships is a means of displaying Jesus’ love and compassion to them.

19. **Live Out His Love**: Where are those women in your life who have not experienced Jesus’ love yet? Where do you frequently see them? Start with where you are presently connected (school, work, gym, neighborhood, sports teams, your children’s friends, community activities). How can you make the most of your connection to build a relationship with at least one woman? This next week, trust in Jesus to lead you to begin an intentional relationship with her so you can share Jesus’ love with her.

Read the essay “Experience the Love of Jesus and Share It with Others” on the next page.
Experience the Love of Jesus & Share It with Others

The quest for fulfillment became the driving force behind women of the '80s and '90s. As women tuned into the highly mobile, high-tech society around them, they begin to turn their energies to new frontiers. To excel, to succeed, even to surpass the accomplishments of their male counterparts, has been the goal of many women who have challenged men’s domain. Now, however, as women examine who they have become, many are wondering where they really belong. It has become painfully clear that achievement and success have not delivered the payoff of personal fulfillment that women have sought. In the brief reflective spaces sandwiched between their frenzied commitments, women are now realizing that external accomplishments do not meet their deepest inner longings. So the search for fulfillment continues.

The desire to find continuity and meaning draws women toward the spiritual arena, where cults are flourishing. As believers, we know that only Jesus can fill the void in a woman’s life. What women desperately need today is exposure to vital Christianity.

All of us rub shoulders with a variety of women every day—women with whom we share a coffee or lunch break, mothers who trade off car-pooling children, neighbors, and friends. They all need to know the answers to these questions, “Who is Jesus Christ?” and “Why did He come?” They also need the answer to “How did He treat women?” and “How can women know Him today?”

To fully appreciate Jesus’ approach to women, we need to resist our impulse to approach Scripture from our twenty-first century cultural perspective. Our understanding of Scripture is more accurate if we step back in time—into the shoes of the women of the first century AD.

The Life of Women in Jesus’ Time

What was it like to be a woman living around the rim of the Mediterranean during Jesus’ time? How was a woman’s role defined by the cultural and religious constraints of that era? By examining the context in which Jesus presented His radical teaching, we begin to appreciate His extraordinary approach in relating to women.

Think back to that time when a man was commended because he killed his wife for appearing in public without her veil. A Roman woman’s rights were completely subject to her father’s power. If she married, then those rights, even the power of life and death, were transferred to her husband.

In both Greek and Roman cultures, women held a second-rate status. Their legal rights were practically non-existent. In fact, only a husband could petition for a divorce. In such a society, permissive polygamy was considered normal—for men. Needless to say, such a practice only further relegated women to an inferior position since they were treated like property, a mere commodity to indicate status or position.

Jewish women fared slightly better than their contemporaries in surrounding cultures. A married woman with children did hold a certain place of honor as a wife and mother, but even that position was tied to her ability to produce male children. It was an agricultural society. Fathers needed sons (lots of them) to help them work the land.

There were three common sayings in those days:

- Hail those whose children are boys; Woe unto those whose children are girls.
- At the birth of a son, all are glad. But about a daughter, people mourn.
- When a boy comes into the world, there is peace. When it’s a girl, there comes nothing.

Those sound bizarre, even cruel, to our modern ears!
Because of a twisted interpretation of the Mosaic Law, the rabbinical leaders taught that women were uneducable. And, they were considered unreliable as courtroom witnesses. Women were even held responsible for the lustful temptations men suffered. A Jewish rabbi would not talk to his wife or daughter in public. There was even a group called the "Bruised and Bleeding Pharisees" because they would rather cover their eyes than look upon a woman in public. As a consequence, they would bump into walls and houses. Notice the transfer—because women were the greatest source of their own personal sin (lust), the woman becomes evil. Rather than face the sin in their own hearts, they make women the scapegoat. That contributed, of course, to the cultural position of women.

But perhaps the plight of Jewish women could best be summarized by the prayer Jewish men daily prayed, “Thank You, God, that I am not a slave, a Gentile, or a woman.”

Enter the Lord Jesus Christ...

Into the midst of this culture, the Lord Jesus Christ entered—with a radically different value system from that of His culture in the way He regarded women. Thus as Jesus’ ministry unfolded, the average citizen of Israel began to witness an extraordinary approach to women, one that cut against the grain of commonly held practices.

- He spoke to them publicly when a rabbi wouldn’t even speak publicly to his wife. (Luke 8)
- He let them travel with Him during His public ministry and support Him with their own money. (Luke 8)
- He taught them openly and continually when the rabbis disdained doing so. (Luke 10)
- He let them be the first witnesses to His resurrection. (John 20)
- He allowed them to honor Him. (Luke 7; John 11)
- He was sensitive and compassionate toward women and performed miracles for them. (Luke 8)
- He never spoke condescendingly to women, never made derogatory jokes about women, never humiliated or exploited women.

And women who knew Him loved Him! And wanted to serve Him!

Jesus treated women as no man had ever treated them before. His warmth, personal attention, tenderness, sound teaching, and compassion toward women were revolutionary. And why shouldn’t He? He created us!

John 1:3 says, “Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made.”

In Col 1:17, we read, “For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him…”

In Gen 1:26a, “Then God said, ‘Let us make man (mankind) in our image, in our likeness...’”

As Creator, He designed us with a mind to know God, emotions to love God, and a will to obey God. This holds true for women as well as for men. Our female minds need to be filled with the knowledge of Him so that our hearts may respond with great love for Him and our wills can choose to obey Him.
Jesus knows us backwards and forwards. He knows about our emotional nature, our need for security and significance, and even our hormones! He understands our need to nurture and to be loved—both from those humans closest to us and from our Creator God. And even though His culture neglected to give women the worth they deserved, He could do no less than show that He loves men and women equally. In fact, He openly demonstrated His love for each individual He met—both men and women—for whom He would ultimately die. We experience His love and are commissioned to live it out in our daily lives so others can experience His love through us.
Lesson 2: An Immoral Woman

Time: Jesus’ Second Year of Ministry, ~28 AD

Historical Perspective: Hospitality in Jesus’ Time

After Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman, He continued teaching and performing many miracles and gained many followers. Consequently, His second year of ministry is known as the “Year of Popularity.” During this period, Jesus chose His 12 disciples and preached the Sermon on the Mount. He spent time traveling throughout Galilee and in the area of Capernaum. Located on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee, Capernaum was a sizable town in Jesus’ day. Peter’s house there became Jesus’ base of operations during His extended ministry in Galilee. The inhabitants of Capernaum had many opportunities to see and hear Jesus.

Hospitality to guests was one of the most important social functions of the ancient Near East. A guest was highly honored even if he was a stranger passing through the town. Though there were inns in Jesus’ day, most travelers looked for a home where they could spend the night. When a stranger appeared at or near someone’s door close to evening, the head of the household almost always let him in and asked him to spend the night. If the homeowner refused to be hospitable, he could be snubbed by friends and neighbors. A host always kept in mind that someday he, too, might be a weary traveler looking for shelter and company.

Once inside, the host’s wife or a servant brought water to wash the guest’s feet, though the host might do it for a special guest. Since the roads were always dusty and most people walked, washing was an important step in making one’s guest feel at home. Common courtesy. When a guest was in the house, a large meal was prepared. Often the guest would be served first, and the host waited until he was finished. Other customs included anointing the guest with oil, which they used as soap, or even providing clothing for the mealtime.

According to custom, a guest should stay no longer than three days in his host’s home. While there, he was protected by his host. On leaving, the host was to escort his guest a short distance, sending him safely on his way.

Pharisees—Religious "Leaders" of Jesus’ Time

The Pharisees were a religious society of ~6,000 men who strictly obeyed the law of God as interpreted by the scribes (lawyers). This law consisted of the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament) and the tradition of the elders (the oral law), containing hundreds of rules and prohibitions.

The Pharisees thought that the oral law, the rules made up by the religious leaders, was equally inspired and was thus to be followed as much as God’s Law. They were especially particular about keeping the laws of tithing and ritual purity. Since the Pharisees found that other Jews were not careful enough about keeping these laws, they placed limits on their own contact with other Jews as well as with Gentiles (anyone who was not a Jew).

Though originally standing against evil in society and in personal lives, by Jesus’ day many had become narrow-minded and petty, more concerned with rules than with God. They looked on sinful people as tainted and, therefore, to be avoided. They did not approve of a rabbi or any other important religious person mingling or eating with sinful people.
Day One Study

Read the Historical Perspective in the box above, then...

   - General Public—
     - Pharisees and Lawyers—

2. Jesus gives an illustration in vv. 31-35. What principle did he give in v. 35?


4. **Live Out His Love:** The New Testament teaches us as believers that we need to discern between good religious teachers/leaders who really care about “shepherding their flock” and the false ones who tear apart a flock of Christians as savage wolves do to sheep—usually through false teaching and selfish behavior.
   - Who empowers us to discern? See 1 Corinthians 2:10-16 and Philippians 1:9-11.

   - What does the Spirit give us as a basis of truth to be able to discern good influences from bad influences?

   - Have you previously asked Jesus to help you discern influences in your life? What happened? If you need that discernment now, ask Jesus for it. This would be a great time to pray for your church leadership as well.
Day Two Study

5. Read Luke 7:36-50. Remember that the Pharisees considered themselves to be Israel's spiritual leaders (Nicodemus in Lesson One), the ones staying faithful to God's law but also the ones to whom Jesus referred in the previous verses (Day One Study). For what reason(s) might the Pharisee have invited Jesus to have dinner with him?

_Think About It:_ We should not overlook the fact that Jesus accepted an invitation to dinner from a Pharisee. He did not cut all the religious leaders off simply because most of them rejected Him. He dealt with people as individuals. He still does!

6. Describe the scene, including the woman and her actions.

_Historical Insight:_ [The woman's] presence was not unusual for "social custom allowed needy people to visit such meals and to partake of some of the leftovers. Moreover, it was not unusual for people to drop in when a rabbi was visiting. Luke gallantly omitted describing why the woman "was a sinner," though...she was a member of the social class called sinners, whom the Pharisees regarded as treating the law loosely." (_Dr. Constable's Notes on Luke_, p. 120)

7. Put yourself in her place. Why _do you think_ she was weeping, using her hair to wipe Jesus' feet?

8. _Deeper Discoveries (optional):_ What is the significance of the alabaster jar of perfume? Its value? Find out everything you can about the jar and its contents during Jesus' time. Jewish women frequently wore such vials suspended from a cord around their necks. What was she giving to Jesus?
Day Three Study

9. Read Luke 7:36-50 concentrating on Jesus' teachable moment with the Pharisee who invited Him (as well as others present). How did the Pharisee, in specific, view the woman?

10. How did Jesus view the woman?

11. Discuss the irony in vs. 39-40 about the Pharisee's thought and Jesus' response. Review John 2:25.

12. Summarize the actual parable told by Jesus to the Pharisee.

13. What is Jesus teaching through the parable?

Think About It: Your capacity to love is directly tied to your capacity to get how deeply you have been forgiven. Agree or disagree?

14. How does Jesus rebuke the Pharisee’s harsh attitude through the parable? What is He implying the Pharisee thinks about himself?
15. **Live Out His Love:** Christians who have been filling their time with church activities and surrounding themselves with church friends for years may develop a critical "stay away from me" attitude towards the nonbelievers around them. We may forget how much we have been forgiven, also. And, we tend to stay comfortable by insulating ourselves from worldly influences through staying away from worldly people, the same people who need to know Jesus' love in their lives.

- Read John 17:15-20. Jesus sent us into the world, not to insulate ourselves from it but to impact it for Him. In what ways do you feel this tension in your life?

- When befriending those who haven't experienced the love of Jesus yet, ask Jesus to help you not act shocked or offended by their language or behavior. Expect them to behave like nonbelievers—language, lifestyle, or relationships. Feel compassion for where they are. Remember, it's not our job to "fix" them but to give them hope by pointing them to Jesus who can give them new life. Consider how to be unshockable. Think through gracious and inviting language of your own.

  ✓ **What not to do or say:** What would not be considered gracious? What words, facial expressions, or body reactions would not be welcoming or inviting?

  ✓ **What to do or say:** What would be gracious? What words, facial expressions, or body reactions would likely be welcoming or inviting?

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**Day Four Study**

16. Reread Luke 7:36-50 concentrating on the results (verses 47-50). What does Jesus grant to her and why?

17. What was her greatest need before knowing Jesus? What did Jesus give her to meet that need?
Focus on the Meaning: The Greek word translated “forgiveness” means literally, "to send off or send away." The result is “to separate the sin from the sinner” as described in Psalm 103:12 and Leviticus 16:20-22). Translated to what Jesus has done for us, forgiveness means, “Man’s guilt has been transferred to a substitute (Jesus Christ) and taken away.” Our problem before Christ came: Mankind is guilty before a holy God. God’s answer is to take away the guilt. What a gracious gift!

18. Did Jesus give her everything she needed to begin to make a life change? Explain your answer. See also 2 Peter 1:3.

Think About It: Jesus took notice of this “worthless” woman of the town, recognized her faith in Him, cleansed her of sin, and gave her new hope.

19. Live Out His Love: No matter what you’ve done and who on earth does not forgive you, Jesus does—through faith in Him! Dwell on the FACT that Jesus will cleanse your conscience from guilt (Hebrews 10:22). Will you take Him at His word? If there is any past sin for which you are still feeling guilty, claim God’s complete forgiveness today. You can simply tell God,

"Thank You for forgiving me, thank You for cleansing my sin and turning something evil into something good. Thank You for being bigger than my sins, and being able to turn things around in ways I cannot imagine. With Jesus’ help, I receive the assurance that You have forgiven me. Help my heart catch up with my head on this. Help me to see that You allowed me to go down that dark path into sin because You are able to redeem even the worst things we do." (Sue Bohlin, Probe Ministries, Sept. 2012)

Now, choose to believe you are forgiven and allow Jesus to cleanse your conscience from any residual guilt. Every time you think about it again, thank God for his amazing gift!

20. Live Out His Love: The best test of whether you have really learned anything or not is by explaining what you have learned to someone else. Review the definition of forgiveness in the Focus on the Meaning above. Then, write how you would explain forgiveness to someone who may not understand it but needs to know the complete forgiveness she has in Christ. Think in terms of someone from a particular age group or stage of life. For example, how would you explain “forgiveness” to a woman who has had an abortion in her past and is feeling awful about it? Or, consider someone you know who is wrestling with guilt over her part in a broken relationship. Explain forgiveness to her.
As you reflect on this study, **remember how much Jesus has forgiven you.** We don’t just need a teacher but a Savior who comes in and does for us what we can’t do for ourselves. All of our debt before God is enormous, being incapable of ever being paid back. Look at people with a sense of equality in our **need** for God’s mercy. Have compassion on non-Christians. Get ideas from Tammy as she reached out to her neighbor...

**Tammy’s Story: Intentional Loving**

This past fall I sat by my neighbor Michelle at all the high school football games. She lives with her boyfriend in my neighborhood and is a self-professing agnostic. We laughed and enjoyed each other’s company all fall, and our relationship developed. Many of the neighborhood women, including those who identify themselves as Christians, don’t even want to be seen talking with her let alone going anywhere with her because of her living arrangements. My husband Tom and I have chosen a different relationship, enjoyed their company and growing friendship along the way.

From the beginning, we began praying for them as a couple asking the Lord to reveal himself to them, not because of their living arrangements, but because neither knows Jesus. Rather than holding them at arm’s length, we have entered into the long slow pull of intentional, grace-filled friendship that seeks to do nothing more than extend the love of Christ to them, and where opportunity presents itself, speak the truth in love.

By spending time together, I have learned a lot about her life that has helped me understand our relationship better. She grew up in a non-religious family that rarely attended worship services. She had many faith questions as a youth that in her view went unanswered and were avoided by her Catechism teachers at a time in her life when she was open to spiritual things. As the years passed she landed on agnosticism, a belief in something, but not knowing what that something is, or whether that something can even be known. With no understanding of God, the revelation of himself and his precepts found in Scripture, she lacked an understanding that it was against God’s standards of holiness to live with someone who is not her husband.

By the end of the football season, I was able to naturally extend an invitation to our Women’s Ministry outreach event, a ladies’ tea where she sat with some of those same neighbors, and she and her boyfriend joined us for the Christmas Eve service and dinner afterwards. We had an amazing night together, and it is clear God is moving in her life. As we hike together we talk about all kinds of things, including spiritual things.

We have had four other ladies who have started attending our church with stories similar to Michelle’s story. In response, my husband Tom offered a class during the school day where they can safely explore the truth claims of the Christian faith. All but one of the ladies decided to attend, plus one more lady from our neighborhood. An older, more spiritually mature woman in our church who is very loving was also willing to come alongside the ladies exploring a relationship to Christ.

After the first class Michelle and I went hiking together. I learned from her that my husband had privately asked her what drew her to the class. Although I know it is the Holy Spirit that is drawing her, she said, “Your wife's persistence.”

I contacted Michelle 7 different ways: 1) sitting by her at football games, 2) inviting her via Facebook, 3) texting her, 4) leaving a message on her phone, 5) dropping the book we would study by her house, 6) calling and reminding her the night before, and 7) being available for hikes.
Sounds persistent, but she respected my perseverance and my excitement I had for her faith growing. Believe in breakthroughs for unbelievers! Pray creatively and courageously for unbelieving friends and neighbors. You never know who has an opportunity to speak truth as they begin to discover Jesus and His healing. Follow through with a willingness to listen and share the freedom Christ has given you.
Lesson 3: An Adulterous Woman

Time: Jesus’ Third Year of Ministry, ~29 AD

Historical Perspective: Religious "Leaders" in Jesus' Time

Although Jesus gained popularity among the masses during His second year of ministry, the disdain of the religious leaders steadily increased during that time. The Jews who desired to kill Jesus were the scribes, Pharisees, chief priests and the Sadducees, many of whom were part of the Sanhedrin, the highest legal and administrative body in the Jewish state in Roman times. (See “Israel’s Political & Religious Leaders” chart on page 3.)

- **The Pharisees** were described in Lesson 2.
- **The scribes**, also called lawyers or teachers of the Law, were an upper class group of learned Jews who thoroughly knew and, therefore, interpreted the Mosaic Law. Many of such academics taught in the local seminary in Jerusalem. According to the tradition of the scribes, there were "secrets" of interpretation that they did not share with the common people thinking that God intended to leave the mass of people ignorant of His reasons for requiring certain things under the Law. Therefore, they had a wrong concept of God and themselves.
- **The Sadducees** came from the leading families of Israel (e.g., the priests, merchants and aristocrats). The high priests and most powerful members of the priesthood were mainly Sadducees. The Sadducees rejected the tradition of the elders and did not believe in the supernatural. They were willing to compromise with the political leaders of the country and tended to be more upper class as comfortable compromisers. It has been estimated that in Jerusalem alone there were more than 20,000 associated with the Sadducees. Pharisees, by contrast, were middle class and more religious than the Sadducees.
- **The Chief Priests** usually came from the class of Sadducees. This group included all the temple officers, including the High Priest and the captain of the temple.
- **Representatives** from all these groups sat on the Sanhedrin, a religious governing body of 71 Jewish elders. They were elected, and then ordained by the laying on of hands. Their responsibilities included governing the Jewish community.

Day One Study

Read Historical Perspective in the box above, then...


2. What did the religious leaders think about the crowds?
3. What did the crowd think about Jesus?

*Scriptural Insight:* What was the purpose of miracles? Besides alleviating suffering, miracles were used by God to authenticate the message and the messenger. See John 7:31 and Acts 2:22.

4. What did the crowd think about the Jewish leaders?

5. Why were the Pharisees and Chief Priests unsuccessful in their attempts to arrest Jesus?

6. How, if at all, did the hostility of these leaders affect Jesus in the way He taught or acted?

7. The religious leaders failed at giving hope to those who needed hope. They lost sight of a true “love for God” that would also include a love for people—all people. Read Matthew 22:34-40. This “greatest commandment” question was asked by a young lawyer (scribe). Relate Jesus’ answer with what motivated Him to continue building relationships with and teaching those who needed to know Him, regardless of the resistance?

8. **Live Out His Love:** Helping women to experience the love of Jesus is an *intentional* and *relational* process flowing from a love for God and love from God for people (Matthew 22:37-39).
   - Define the two words: intentional and relational.
   - What would it look like in your life to build an intentional relationship with a woman who needs to know how much Jesus loves her?
   - Ask Jesus to give you His love for people that will lead you to be an intentional, relational disciplemaker.
Day Two Study

The earliest manuscripts didn't contain John 7:53-8:11, the passage we are studying in this lesson. However, reference to this passage can be traced back to ~ AD 100. So, most scholars conclude that this passage represents a genuine episode in Jesus' ministry, preserved for inspiration and instruction.

There was much controversy and conflicting opinions in Judea at this time concerning Jesus' identity. The Feast of the Tabernacles, or Festival of Booths, was the most popular feast of the year in which the people made booths for themselves out of tree branches and celebrated the completion of harvest and God's goodness to His people during the desert wanderings. After the Feast of the Tabernacles, the Jewish leaders attempt to ruin Jesus using an adulterous woman as "Bait for the Trap."

9. Read John 8:1-11. Where was Jesus, and what was He doing?

10. Describe the woman and her circumstances.

11. What trap did the religious leaders think they were placing around Jesus?


13. The religious leaders asked a question “Now what do you say?” How did Jesus respond to their question?
**Scriptural Insight:** Many have tried to guess what Jesus wrote on the ground. Some suggest He wrote the sins of the accusers. Others propose that He wrote the words of Exodus 23:1, "Do not [be] a malicious witness." Still others say He simply traced His finger in the dust while preparing to respond." His words spoken to the crowd are what really count. (Walvoord and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*, p. 347)

14. Discuss the response of those who heard Jesus' words. What did they recognize about themselves?

15. Read 2 Corinthians 5:21. Who was the only person qualified to stone her?

Day Three Study

16. Reread John 8:1-11. Remember the woman. What might have been going through her mind as she was standing there before Jesus and the crowd?

17. Put yourself in her shoes. What kept her there standing before Him (v. 9)?

18. What does Jesus say to her?

19. What qualities does Jesus display toward the woman and toward her behavior?

21. **Live Out His Love:** Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8. The Bible clearly teaches that immorality is not pleasing to God. We are instructed to "flee/avoid immorality." Are you currently in immoral behavior—an affair, pornography, living with someone who is not your husband? What choices do you need to make in order to flee from immorality or "leave your life of sin"? Are you confident that your heavenly Father has given you everything you need in order to do this? Ask your group to pray for you and give you help as needed to start a new way of life.

For additional help, see the "Greener-Grass Syndrome" at the end of this lesson.

**Day Four Study**

22. Read the following verses. What caution does Jesus give us concerning judging others?
   - Matthew 7:1-5 —
   - John 7:24 —
   - Galatians 6:1 —

23. After Jesus forgave her, what are His instructions to her and what does that mean?

24. Read Hebrews 4:14-16. What is promised to us?
25. **Live Out His Love**: The snapshots in the gospels of the three women we have studied in the first 3 lessons clearly illustrate the distinction that Jesus makes between the sin and the sinner. He dealt with the sin in their lives while showing His love and concern for the women. In our study, we have contrasted His attitude toward the women with that of the Pharisees and other "religious" leaders. Do you have a hard time making this distinction when dealing with immoral friends or family members? For what can you specifically ask your heavenly Father to give to you that would help you to love them with Jesus' love?
Greener-Grass Syndrome

by Kimberlee Hertzer

“We were just platonic friends when he added me as a friend on Facebook. A month later, I decided to leave my husband and children for him. After all, I was so unhappy in my marriage. Shouldn’t I be with someone who makes me happy?”

Sound familiar? If not, it will, as more and more Christian married women turn to other men to meet their needs. The “Greener-Grass Syndrome” has been around as long as green grass, but with the popularity of social media, the temptation and ease of grazing in someone else’s yard is greater now than ever.

Are you struggling with the “Greener-Grass Syndrome” or know someone who is? If you’re having an emotional or physical affair, here are four crucial questions that you need to ask, along with some practical advice for how to get back into your own yard.

What Caused the Affair?

If you’re like most women, you were probably drawn into the affair because of an unmet emotional need from your childhood or marriage. Maybe you were sexually abused as a child by a close family member and struggle with being able to trust. Perhaps you’re married to a good man, but you somehow feel disconnected and your needs aren’t being met. Or maybe you feel lonely and unappreciated, because your husband is too busy leading mission trips to concentrate on your marriage.

No one understood what it was like to have unmet needs in a relationship more than the Samaritan woman. Christ reached out to her with compassion and grace, in spite of her having a string of unfulfilled relationships. He gave her an invitation to find intimacy through a relationship with Him when He said, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:13–14 NIV).

After five husbands and who knows how many lovers, this woman finally met the Man who could fill the void in her life. If Christ was able to meet the needs of the Samaritan woman, why can’t He meet yours?

When Did the Affair Start?

Likely, your affair started like most affairs do—with a harmless friendship. Perhaps after a while, you started meeting for coffee regularly and texting throughout the day. Slowly, you let your guard down and began to fantasize about him. In Proverbs 4:23 we’re taught, “Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life” (NLT). But you didn’t guard your heart. You let your boundaries down completely, which led to a full-blown physical affair. For the first few months, it was romantic and exciting, but now, maybe after a year or two, the same old feelings of discontentment and emptiness have returned.

You may also feel stuck—unhappy in your marriage and unhappy in your affair. What should you do? Well, you should end the affair. But how?

How Do You End the Affair?

It’s crucial that you write a letter to the other man, dissolving your relationship and ending all communication with him. You must also get a new cell phone number and e-mail address so that you cannot receive any messages and be tempted to respond. If you work with him, you should
consider quitting and changing jobs. And if he goes to your church, you’ll need to switch churches.

These measures might seem extreme, but it’s important for you to take severe steps to prevent you from falling back into a relationship with this man, as well as to protect you from an affair happening again in the future. We are reminded in Matthew 5:30, “And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away” (NIV). Obviously, Jesus wasn’t endorsing self-mutilation but rather making a dramatic point in a dramatic way: do whatever it takes to keep yourself free from the sins of lust and adultery.

**How Do You Rebuild Your Marriage?**

First, you must seek counsel from your pastor or a trained Christian counselor whom you and your husband can meet with weekly. Second, you’ll need to confess your sin to the Lord and to your husband. It’s often helpful if this is done in the context of meeting with your pastor or counselor. James 5:16 tells us to “confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective” (NIV). Third, you and your husband need to know how and why the affair happened, as well as place firm boundaries in your marriage to prevent it from happening again.

If you’re struggling with the “Greener-Grass Syndrome,” remember that only the Lord can meet all of your needs for intimacy. I pray that the Lord will reveal to you that the grass really isn’t greener on the other side and that He will give you a desire to cultivate your own marriage.

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Hurting Women—Identified by Pain

Lesson 4: A Sick Woman & A Dead Girl

Time: Jesus’ Second Year of Ministry, ~AD 29

Historical Perspective

Jesus had been teaching God’s Word to large crowds in the area around Capernaum, healing many people. Then, He and His disciples got into a boat and headed to the east side of the lake. A windstorm literally came down from the surrounding mountains through the Jordan River gorge upon the Sea of Galilee, which is 680 feet below sea level, and shook the boat like a tempest. This type of storm was, and still is, a common occurrence. Jesus demonstrated His power over nature by rebuking the wind and waves then admonished the disciples for their lack of faith. Soon after, He encountered a woman and a girl in desperate need.

Women were not highly respected in Jesus’ day. In fact, they were held responsible for the lustful temptations men suffered. A Jewish rabbi would not talk to his wife or daughter in public. There was even a group of them called the “Bruised and Bleeding Pharisees” because they would rather cover their eyes than look upon a woman in public. As a consequence, they would bump into walls and houses. Notice the transfer—because women were the greatest source of their own personal sin (lust), the woman becomes evil. Rather than face the sin in their own hearts, they make women the scapegoat. That contributed, of course, to the cultural position of women. (For more information on women in Jesus’ time, see the essay at the end of Lesson One.)

A ruler of the synagogue was a layman whose responsibilities were administrative and included such things as looking after the building (maintenance, repairs, and cleaning) as well as supervising the worship (conducting services, selecting participants and maintaining order). Though there were exceptions, most synagogues had only one ruler. Sometimes the title was honorary with no administrative responsibilities assigned. In any case, he was considered an elder so he sat in the reserved seats.

Hopefully in our study so far, you have seen how absolutely different the Lord Jesus Christ was from His culture in the way He regarded women! Thus as Jesus’ ministry unfolded, the average citizen of Israel began to witness an extraordinary approach to women, one that cut against the grain of commonly held practices. Jesus treated women as no man had ever treated them before. His warmth, personal attention, tenderness, sound teaching, and compassion toward women were revolutionary.

Day One Study

Read the Historical Perspective in the box above, then...

1. Read Mark 5:1-21. Why would a large crowd gather around Jesus as described in v. 21?
**Focusing on the Woman**


**Historical Insight:** Her condition, though unknown, is probably uterine hemorrhaging like a number of women experience with endometriosis or fibroid tumors. The medical treatments available for her condition were limited although the Talmud (a book of Jewish history and rules) claims that physicians had at least 11 remedies. Some of the ones documented were: 1) carrying ashes of ostrich eggs on your body and 2) taking ground-up willow bark—a bitter-tasting remedy containing salicin, an aspirin-like drug, that would have only aggravated her bleeding.

3. Consider what kind of life this woman had led for 12 years. How would this ailment have affected her family life, social life, and worship opportunities? See Leviticus 15:19-33 for clues. Considering what you as a woman enjoy in life, what did she miss out on?

**Scriptural Insight:** The consequences of being “unclean” until evening or for several days were that you were excluded from the temple area (and synagogue seating), excluded from mingling with others, and considered separated from God. An unnatural discharge was treated like an illness, requiring an offering upon recovery.

4. **Live Out His Love:** Do you know a woman who is desperately ill? Consider these questions:
   - What are her felt needs?
   - Does she feel isolated or alienated because of her condition?
   - Does her illness have a social stigma attached to it so that she is not comfortable in public?
   - Does she have a relationship with Jesus yet?

How can you reach out to her with compassion to meet her felt needs and encourage a relationship with Jesus? Consider the best ways to do this.
Day Two Study

5. Reread Mark 5:24-34. What brought the sick woman to Jesus for healing?

Think About It: It’s our job to tell others about how Jesus can change lives. How can others hear without a proclaimer (good news teller)? No one knows how many times it takes for someone to pay attention and respond. Our role is to tell.

6. Put yourself in her shoes. As an ordinary woman, what emotions would she have experienced…
   - As she reached out to touch Jesus’ cloak?
   - After she felt healing?

Scriptural Insight: The unusual expression, “Jesus realized that power had gone out from Him,” has been understood in two ways. “One view maintains that God the Father healed the woman, and Jesus was not aware of it till afterward. The other view is that Jesus Himself, wishing to honor the woman’s faith, willingly extended His healing power to her. The latter view is more consistent with Jesus’ healing ministry. Power did not leave Him without His knowledge and will. However, He exercised it only at the Father’s bidding. The touch of the garment had no magical effect.” (Walvoord and Zuck, The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament, p. 125)

7. Discuss Jesus’ response to the woman.

From the Greek: The Greek for “healed” actually means ‘save.’ Here both physical healing (‘be freed from your suffering’) and spiritual salvation (‘go in peace’) are meant. The two are often seen together in Mark’s Gospel (Mark 2:1-12; 3:1-6). (NIV Study Bible note on Mark 5:34, p. 1503)
8. Why do you think He insists upon her revealing herself? What would be the advantage to her?

_Think About It_: Now she could enter society because she is healed AND she receives spiritual life as well. God always does more than we ask or think.

9. Discuss her response to Jesus seeking her out, including why she trembled with fear.

10. _Live Out His Love_: Jesus gave this suffering woman an opportunity to give her testimony publicly. Everyone hears her tell why she touched Him and how she had been instantly healed. Others now hear. Her pain caused her to seek help from Jesus by faith.

   Describe any of your own painful circumstances that have driven you to Christ. What did you learn about His faithfulness through that experience? How did others minister to you in love, showing Christ to you? This is part of your faith story that you can share with another woman.

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Day Three Study

_Focusing on the Girl (and Her Family)_


12. Consider Jairus’ position in the community (see “Historical Perspective” above). Contrast his apparent view of Jesus with that of the Pharisees and other religious leaders we have studied so far. Why the difference?
13. Read Mark 5:35-43 and Luke 8:49-56. What specific circumstance has occurred?

14. Discuss Jesus’ words…
   • To Jairus—
   • To the wailing crowd outside Jairus’ house—

15. Why did the wailers laugh at Jesus?

16. Who went into the room with Jesus?

17. Once inside, what did Jesus do for the girl AND her mom and dad? Notice His tenderness toward the girl through His words and gestures.

18. Discuss why Jesus might have instructed the girl's parents to tell no one what had happened.

19. How is Jairus’ initial faith challenged and stretched through this whole incident?
20. **Live Out His Love**: From Jairus' viewpoint, he had to wait an agonizingly long time for Jesus to respond to his request through delays, diversions, and disappointing news. Look carefully again at Mark 5:36. What was Jesus' plan all along? Had He forgotten Jairus? Underline and memorize this verse. What comfort does it give to you? Dependent living is learning to say to Jesus, “Lord, I can’t do this on my own. But, you can in and through me. I will trust you.” Then, see what He does.

Day Four Study

21. Considering Jesus’ manner towards both the older woman and the girl (soon-to-be woman), in what ways did Jesus show that He thought of both of them as worthwhile individuals?

22. **Live Out His Love**:

- When you petition the Lord, do you have faith in Him that He has heard and will answer? Are you willing to wait? For encouragement, read 1 John 5:14-15.

- Are you willing to accept "No" for an answer? Provide an example of an experience where God did not respond as you expected. How did you react? What was the ultimate outcome? What did you learn about God? Write this out in the space below as though you were telling it to someone. This is part of your faith story. Ask God to give you an opportunity this week to share this part of your faith story with someone else who is having a difficult time waiting for God or accepting His “No” answer.

For additional insight on Jesus’ compassion for these women, read “Jesus, a Personal God” on the next page.
Jesus, A Personal God

By Melanie Newton

Get the picture... A huge crowd of people welcomes Jesus. They were expecting Him. They are pressing around Him, crushing Him so that He could hardly move or breathe because of the jam. Driven from the Decapolis (Mark 5:17), He is welcomed in Galilee. They can hardly wait to see what He would do next.

Suddenly a man pushes his way through the crowd, falls at Jesus’ feet and pleads earnestly with Him to come and lay hands on his daughter. The synagogue ruler was a layman responsible for maintaining order, conducting services, cleaning the building, much like deacons or executive pastors do today. He was prominent and wealthy. But he had a problem that neither his prominence nor his wealth could solve. Luke tells us that his daughter was 12, an only child, and was dying.

Jairus obviously loves his daughter even though sons were considered more valuable, and he is very specific in what He wants Jesus to do. “Come and touch her.” The Jews believed that the touch transmitted vitality. Jairus had faith in Jesus’ touch, and he expressed that faith. Jesus acts upon the faith we have which is wonderful and encouraging to us. But, would Jesus take time out to go to Jairus’ house for a little girl? Was a little girl of any value in His eyes? Jesus goes with him. To Him, this little girl is just as important as anyone else. He starts off with the crowd following Him.

But in this crowd is a woman who has a desperate need. Her life is a living death, and her condition is hopeless. Her bleeding is probably uterine hemorrhaging like a number of women experience with endometriosis or menopause or perhaps it is something else. She has suffered for 12 years with no break; she is probably pale, emaciated, weakened. She must have been a woman of some means—at least she possessed enough financial resources to continue to seek out one doctor after another.

Jewish literature has a whole section of remedies for this malady, which apparently didn’t work. One was to carry ashes of ostrich eggs on her body. She may also have been given ground up willow bark to reduce her pain. This was a bitter tasting remedy containing salicin, an aspirin-like drug that would have only aggravated her bleeding. All her money was gone, and she was worse. Her one chance came now with Jesus.

Yet even worse than her physical condition is the social and religious ostracism she was certain to have faced. The prevailing opinions of her day were much the same as our own: Bad things don’t happen to good people. You get what you justly deserve. Thus, to be stricken with a chronic, incurable disease such as this was tantamount to a confession of sinful behavior, presumably being immoral.

According to Mosaic Law, anyone with a bodily discharge is ceremonially unclean. She cannot enter the synagogue or the Temple. People shun her generally, since anyone having physical contact with her is made ceremonially unclean until after they bathe and wait a specific period of time. She can touch no one, and no one can touch her. Think of how this would have affected:

- Her social life—not be invited to parties, weddings, anything.
- Her worship life—she couldn’t even sit in the women’s section of the synagogue.
- Her marital life—her husband would be unclean for 7 days after every sexual encounter with her; perhaps she had been divorced and shut off from her family.
She is an outcast: lonely, isolated, and probably in a state of clinical depression. If this should seem unreal to you, Ethiopian Jewish women experience this during their days of monthly uncleanness. They live in little hovels at the edge of the village, the boundary being defined by stones. The women can’t go pass the stones, and no men can come near them. Isolation. Modern examples are women who have AIDS, cancer, ostomies, oxygen tanks and tubes, burn scars, and disfigurements. By the way, men with a similar problem were also considered unclean.

This desperate woman hears about Jesus. It’s our job to tell. How can they hear without a preacher or proclaimer? Who knows how many times it takes? She heard he was healing all kinds of incurable diseases. Hope flickers in her heart. Just going into the surging crowd would have brought their hostility on her if they knew.

She comes to Jesus on her own. Sadly, no friend has brought her to Jesus. She acts on her own faith—mixed with some superstition about his garments. She doesn’t know if Jesus would respond to her. She thinks to herself, “If I just touch His clothes.” She wouldn’t ask him to touch her. She reaches out and touches His cloak. Probably one of the four tassels on his outer garment. She took the initiative for her own healing and is the only woman in the Bible to do this. Others inadvertently touched Him; she deliberately did. Immediately, her bleeding stops. Power surges through her body. She feels it. She knows she is completely healed. It is a vivid moment of joy for her!!!

At once, Jesus turns and asks, “Who touched me?” Did Jesus already know who touched Him? Commentaries will disagree on this. Most say God healed her through the power active in Jesus. So, when He felt the power go out of Him, He turned to ask. I believe He knew what happened because He was always God. He laid aside His glory and did not use His attributes for Himself while on earth. But He knew what happened. He always knew what those around him were thinking before they spoke. It is a dramatic moment for Jesus and for the timid woman. Later it was a common practice for the crowds to touch the hem of his garments and be healed. Here Jesus chooses to single out this case for examination. There is no magic in the garments of Jesus. Even if there is superstition in the woman’s mind, Jesus honors her faith.

Jesus isn’t asking for His sake, but for her sake. He wants her to have a personal relationship with Him. Jesus will not allow the woman to recede into the crowd without publicly commending her faith, giving her assurance that she is permanently healed, thus declaring publicly that she is now clean, and letting her know that He accepts her. It is also likely that He wants her to know that He freely gave to her rather than her thinking she was taking something secretly.

Although a far more impressive male leader had asked Jesus to come to his home to heal his daughter, Jesus stopped the whole procession to talk to this poor, outcast woman as though she were the only one there. God’s love shows no partiality. We are more than just a face in the crowd.

Jesus wants us to know that, too. You may know someone who is involved in a bad relationship with a man who does not encourage her, support and respect her, or appreciate her worth. He may be too busy bossing her around. You need to let her know that Jesus considers her valuable.

Jesus will not allow the woman to recede into the crowd without publicly speaking to her and commending her faith. He keeps looking, penetratingly. The disciples are unconcerned and give a nervy answer about the crowd. Jairus is probably getting very anxious and impatient about this woman. But, Jesus insists. When she sees He’s not going to let her go unnoticed, she tells Him the whole truth. Some of us feel that God isn’t noticing our pain. We pray, nothing happens. We are not unnoticed. He is sovereign, and He knows. He chooses the instrument He uses to make us more like the Lord Jesus Christ. And suffering is an important instrument in His hands much as
we hate it. A goldsmith keeps the metal in the fire until his reflection is seen in its surface. God keeps us in the fire of suffering until He sees the character of His Son reflected in our lives.

The trembling woman falls at His feet. What a vivid picture of the feeling of this sensitive woman who now had to speak. Everyone hears her tell why she touched Him and how she had been instantly healed. She gives her simple testimony. Others now hear.

Jesus calls her, “Daughter,” the only time recorded when He addresses a woman by this name. It’s a tender expression. She has a new relationship with God and a new relationship with Jesus. Remember whom He said were in His family? Those who do God’s will. Those who believe in Him. All through the Gospels, Jesus honored an individual’s faith in Him or rebuked a lack of faith. Jesus took the time to point out to both the men and women in the crowd that this woman’s faith was the reason for her healing.

The New Testament word for “healed” actually means “saved” as well. Here both physical healing (freed from suffering) and spiritual salvation (peace) are meant. The two are often seen together in Mark’s gospel. Romans 5:1 says we have peace with God through faith in His son. Peace speaks of wholeness in our relationship with God when we trust Christ. She just wanted healing. Now she could enter society because she is healed AND she receives spiritual life as well. God always does more than we ask or think. Because He sees the woman’s needs, He does not pass her by. He seems acutely aware of the woman’s pain, and so He reaches out to help.

Jesus has the right to choose what He brings into our lives.

In the meantime, Jairus’ faith is stretched. His little girl dies. This woman has delayed them. What is Jairus thinking by now? Jesus tells Jairus, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.” In the Greek, this really means, “Stop being afraid and keep on believing” (a continuous action). You can’t do both at the same time since being afraid and believing are mutually exclusive. The Psalmist said, “I will trust and not be afraid” (Psalm 56:3).

This is important for us as well. When fear overwhelms us, we can with an act of our will stop being afraid and choose to believe God that He is in control and will not abandon us. Fear is an emotion; faith is an act of the will. We moms have to do this particularly with our kids. We trust the Lord with their lives and do our best to guide them.

Jesus promises Jairus that his daughter will be healed. It takes more faith to believe that He can bring someone back from the dead than to just heal from a deadly disease. Jesus wants to stretch Jairus’ faith. It takes greater faith for tougher times. We always have solutions we pray to the Lord. But we have to face life realistically saying to the Lord, “I am your daughter, Lord. Help me to deal with this situation.” Remember that God is good all the time. You can trust His goodness in what He chooses to do in your life.

Jesus tenderly takes the little girl by the hand, touches her (this makes a Jew unclean, but nothing can make Jesus unclean), and speaks to her in tender terms, “Little girl, get up.” Her spirit returns. The touch of Christ’s hand and the power of His voice restore her to life. She stands up with instantaneous recovery. Her parents are “out of their minds” with excitement and joy. He tells them to feed her. He has done His part. He turns her over to her parents to do theirs.

Jesus cares for women.

Jesus stopped His public ministry to heal two women—

- One publicly; the other privately.
- One was socially dead; the other physically dead.
• One touched Him and was healed without a word; the other He touched and spoke to when she was healed
• One was an outcast; the other was loved within her family circle
• Both were unclean.
• Both were healed instantly and completely, receiving new life.
• Both were beyond human help and without hope.

Jesus demonstrated the value He places on every person—radically different from His day. He healed a man of horrible demonic possession whom everyone else had shunned (Mark 5:1-20). He took time out from his busy schedule to minister to two women personally. God’s love knows no partiality.

Jesus takes a personal interest in each one of us. His value system then is the same today. He cares for us as individuals. He meets our individual needs. He openly demonstrated His love for each individual He met, man or woman.

Jesus has the right to choose what He brings into our lives. He tells us to stop being afraid and to keep on believing, to exercise the faith that we have.

Jesus loves a woman’s soul. He treated women as no man had ever treated them before. His warmth, personal attention, tenderness, sound teaching, and compassion toward women were revolutionary. Jesus loves you in the same way.
Hurting Women—Identified by Pain

Lesson 5: A Canaanite & a Crippled Woman

Time: Jesus’ Third Year of Ministry, ~AD 29

**Historical Perspective**

During the third year of Jesus’ ministry, the “Year of Opposition,” Jesus fed five thousand plus, walked on water, calmed the storm, healed many who were brought to him and taught some Pharisees and teachers of the law the difference between clean and unclean. He then withdrew about fifty miles to the region of Tyre (some later manuscripts say “Tyre and Sidon”) on the Mediterranean coast. (See the map below.)

Tyre is an ancient seaport city of the Phoenicians north of Palestine consisting of a rocky coastal city and an island city. The Phoenicians were known for their trade and commerce and their skill as a seafaring people. Over time, Phoenicia was dominated by the Persians, Greeks, and Romans. Throughout history, friendly relations existed between the Hebrews and Tyrians. In fact, Jewish communities were scattered throughout the region. The home where Jesus stayed was probably Jewish. In the New Testament period, a Christian community flourished at Tyre so that Paul even stayed with the believers there at the end of his third missionary journey (Acts 21:1-7).

While in the region of Tyre, Jesus was approached by a non-Jewish woman from that vicinity. Matthew identifies her as a Canaanite, a descendant of the tribes conquered during Israel’s conquest of Canaan (described in the book of Joshua). Mark adds that she was of Greek culture born in Syrian Phoenicia (the north part of Phoenicia near Syria).

**Day One Study**

Read the Historical Perspective in the box above, then…

1. Read Mark 7:1-21. Discuss Jesus’ teaching about what makes a person “clean” or “unclean.”

**Getting to Know The Canaanite Woman**

2. Read Matthew 15:21-28 and Mark 7:24-30. What could be the reason Jesus withdrew the 30 miles to the region of Tyre and didn’t want anyone to know it (Mark 7:24)?
3. Describe the Canaanite woman and her circumstances.

4. Read the following scriptures. Identify some of the evidences/symptoms of demon possession.
   - Matthew 8:28; Mark 5:1-5—
   - Matthew 12:22—
   - Mark 9:17-18—
   - Luke 13:11,16—

5. Discuss how the Canaanite woman got Jesus’ attention (Matthew 15:22, Mark 7:25). Note: The phrase "crying out" means to “croak” (as a raven) or to call aloud (shriek, exclaim, entreat).

6. What did the woman ask Jesus to do?

7. Discuss the disciples’ response to this woman and her need.

8. **Live Out His Love:** We all want to get away from such interruptions by needy people at times. Our responses may be governed by our time schedule, biases, and even hard hearts. We cannot meet every need. But, who can meet the spiritual needs of every person? Put yourself in the disciples’ shoes, what should they have done for that woman instead of trying to send her away?
Day Two Study

9. What does the woman falling at Jesus’ feet tell you about her? See also Mark 5:22, 33.

Jesus’ answer to her in Matthew 15:24 and Mark 7:27 can be puzzling unless you understand the context. He had already taught people from Tyre and Sidon before in His ministry (Luke 7:17) and healed a Gentile’s loved ones (Luke 7:1-10). In this case, Jesus was getting away with His “children” (the disciples) for them to “eat” (He would teach them), not to focus on this largely Gentile community (Gentiles were commonly called “dogs” by the Jews). He was basically telling her she would have to wait. Or, was He? Could He have just been assessing her faith?

10. Discuss the woman’s response to Jesus’ statement.

*From the Greek:* “She took no offence at the implication of being a Gentile dog. Rather she with quick wit took Christ’s very word for little dogs (*kunaria*) and deftly turned it to her own advantage, for the little dogs eat of the crumbs (*psiciwn*, little morsels) that fall from the table of their masters (*kuriwn*), the children.” (A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, on Matthew 15:27.

11. How does Jesus respond to her and meet her need?

12. What could the disciples have learned about ministry from this incident?

13. Read Luke 18:1-8. Compare the Canaanite woman’s persistence with the widow’s persistence. From the points Jesus made at the end of the parable, what is God looking for in His children?
14. **Live Out His Love:** To *intercede* means to speak with someone in authority on behalf of someone else. This woman came to Jesus, an authority in her mind, and interceded for her daughter who was unable to come to Jesus on her own. Other examples of intercession are the four men who brought their paralyzed friend to Jesus in Mark 2:1-13. Both the Holy Spirit and Jesus Himself intercede for us in prayer (Romans 8:26, 34) when we are unable to do so. How persistent are you at interceding for those you love who may need your help and support? Share insights/examples on how best to intercede for them.

*Why did Jesus perform so many miracles?*

The answer could simply be to show His authority and to draw the attention of the crowds to His message. His miracles demonstrated that He is God and that His message, therefore, had authority (Acts 2:22). Miracles authenticate the message and the messenger. Miracles also demonstrate God’s compassion for His people. Through His miracles, Jesus showed that...

- **He has power beyond that of an ordinary man.** The laws of the natural world, which He created, were not boundaries for Him.
- **He is the fulfillment of prophecy concerning the Messiah.** When Jesus taught in Nazareth (Luke 4:18-21), He read from Isaiah 61:1-2, a prophecy describing the coming Messiah by the works He would do—healing the blind, freeing prisoners, and releasing the oppressed. Jesus basically finished by saying, "I am that one." People get so excited about the sensational that they miss the purpose which was to cause them to believe (John 10:25, 36-38; Acts 2:22; Hebrews 2:3b-4). He was their God.
- **He is God on earth,** Emmanuel. In John 6:25, Jesus calls miracles "signs." A sign points to something. Everything He did pointed to the fact that He was the Messiah—God on Earth. The crowds just wanted the benefits—food, protection, health. Jesus wanted people to hear the message and not be captivated by the miracles. This is important today because people are taken in by the unexplainable and the miraculous. And, we as women can be particularly vulnerable to this. It is very easy to get off focus when miracles are involved. The Jews were looking for a king to rescue them from the Romans not to rescue them from something worse—their slavery to sin.

God still performs miracles today though we may not see them as often as we’d like. Miracles still authenticate the message and the messenger. For someone claiming to do miraculous things, ask these questions to make sure he is representing God:

- What is his message?
- Does he exalt Jesus as the ONLY way to God?
- Is the Bible his ONLY authority?
- Is forgiveness of sins found ONLY through Jesus Christ?

Remember that the greatest miracle is what God does to change a human heart and redeem a lost life from the inside out.
Day Three Study

**Historical Insight:** The Jewish Synagogue—The practice among the Jewish people of Jesus' time was that the Jewish Synagogue building must be on a high point, the highest point in town, if possible. It should be near water, with the entrance to the east and the seats arranged so that the congregation faced Jerusalem when praying. For a town to have a synagogue, at least ten Jewish men must live there.

Synagogues were places of worship and education. Here the young were trained in Jewish life and language. Worshipers gathered on the Sabbath to pray and read the Scriptures. The most important piece of furniture was the shrine that held the Torah, the sacred roll or scroll on which parts of the Old Testament Scriptures were written. The bema, made of stone or wood, was an elevated platform next to the Torah shrine. Lessons and benedictions were given from this platform. Rows of stone benches surrounded the walls and provided seating for the people. The elders and rulers sat in an isolated section. Services included prescribed readings, prayer, and a sermon. Respected teachers who were visiting for the Sabbath were usually invited to speak.

**Getting to Know The Crippled Woman**


17. Compare and contrast this Jewish woman with the Canaanite woman.

18. What was the cause of her condition?
19. Consider what kind of life this woman had led for 18 years. Put yourself in her shoes. How would this ailment possibly have affected her family life, social life, and worship life?

20. How did Jesus heal this woman, and what was her response?

**Focus on the Meaning:** There is “symbolic value in Luke’s placing this miracle at this point in the narrative. It was Jesus’ mission among the people of the nation to loosen them from crippling influences and bring them to uprightness. Here was a graphic example of Jesus’ touch, bringing the woman to a position of uprightness.” (Walvoord and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*, p. 240)

**Day Four Study**

21. Reread Luke 13:10-17. The healed woman expressed a proper response to being healed. Discuss the synagogue ruler’s reaction to the healing. [To review the role of the synagogue ruler, look back to Lesson 4, page 31.]

**Scriptural Insight:** “No one had spoken to him, but he felt his importance as the ruler of the synagogue and was indignant. His words have a ludicrous sound as if all the people had to do to get their crooked backs straightened out was to come around to his synagogue during the week.” (A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures of the New Testament*, note on Luke 13:14)

22. Discuss Jesus’ answer to the synagogue ruler. What message was Jesus conveying to the synagogue ruler and others in the crowd who thought like him?
23. **Deeper Discoveries (optional):** Jesus called the synagogue ruler a *hypocrite*. Define this term. What did it mean in Jesus’ day? Find other places in the gospels where Jesus used this same term to get the attention of His listeners. In what ways were they being *hypocrites*?

24. Considering Jesus’ teaching in this passage, read Matthew 12:11-12; Mark 2:27-28, and John 5:16-17. In His teaching, how did Jesus consistently clarify the purpose of Israel’s Sabbath (seventh-day rest) and the way it should be practiced?

*Think About It:* The tendency of human beings is to put rules over relationships or rules over the needs of people (like the synagogue ruler did). Jesus showed the value of people over misguided rules, traditions and practices. God was still being worshipped, even more so because of the miracle, and the people were still enjoying a day of rest from their usual employment.

25. **Live Out His Love:** Jesus extended grace to both of the women in this lesson, actually three if you count the Canaanite woman’s daughter who was healed. Grace is unmerited favor. It is a gift that is undeserved—by anyone! The disciples and the synagogue ruler were less interested in responding to the needs of the women with grace (knowing Jesus could heal the suffering) than they were in sending them away (one because she was an unclean Gentile; the other because she dared to get healed on the Sabbath). Do you tend to put rules over relationships or the needs of people? In what areas of your life do you do this? Ask Jesus to reveal any hypocrisy in your heart and help you to extend grace rather than judgment to someone in need around you.

Read “Hannah’s Story: The ‘What For’ Quilt” on the next page.
Hannah’s Story: The “What For” Quilt

Several years ago, my husband and I were transferred by his company to a rather remote location. Since most of us were from somewhere else, the women connected with my husband’s company were drawn together for support and friendship. There was one lady named Nina who would often come who seemed a little awkward socially, a little rough around the edges. And while she was very friendly, I admit that she wasn’t someone I immediately sought out to get to know better.

After being there for about a year, and only having spoken to her at social gatherings, I heard that Nina had had a serious health setback and was basically confined to her house. My vague response of “Oh that’s too bad” changed when I had a distinct urge from God to call her to go and visit. I managed to ignore the first two urges, but by the third time, I was pretty sure that I needed to call her. So I dialed her number, introduced myself and said something like, “I wondered if it was okay if I came by.” She answered with a flat, sharp, “What for?” Since I couldn’t say that God told me to do it, I drew a breath and stumbled through something like, “I heard you haven’t been feeling great and thought you might like a visit.”

And so I went, with great fear and trembling that I was headed for a very uncomfortable hour with someone who wished I wasn’t there. I had no expectations, no little Bible tract with the gospel written out—just me and some cookies. Her house was jam-packed with mementos and collections, and she had a full quilting studio set up in her basement with twenty different projects in various stages of completion. This was my first, but not my last, clue that she had ADD. It turned out to be very easy for me to show interest in her collections and in her quilting. She spent most of her time working on quilts for other people: her children, her siblings and their children, and her medical specialists. I told her I had started a quilt about ten years before and never completed it, and that began a more than two-year routine of us getting together every available Thursday to quilt together for the day.

It took a while for her to believe that I really wanted to come, that it wasn’t just a pity thing. Her husband didn’t approve. He was very protective of her, and he was extremely private, so didn’t like the idea of having a crossover from work to personal life. It also took a while for her to trust me. But we gradually shared about our children and our pasts, and I understood that her crusty attitude had a lot to do with protection from having been hurt many times. I learned that she had been a special education teacher and had a real connection with the children because of her empathy and understanding. She was very smart, remembered absolutely everything, was extremely creative, and was hilarious, although I often had to keep from wincing at her language.

Just to paint you a picture – these Thursdays were exhausting for me. I had to pack up lunch and supplies and drive about 40 minutes each way to her house (in between my kids being home from school). Spending the day with Nina was mentally exhausting. I was always a couple of steps behind her conversation, because she moved so fast, jumped from topic to topic, and threw in phrases and short forms (and language) that I wasn’t used to. Also, because of how easily hurt she was, I always had to be careful with my responses. This did improve with time, as we got used to each other. And in case you are thinking of it – don’t learn to quilt from a person with ADHD. I had to give up all of my perfectionist tendencies and just go with it. I never knew what new project she was going to have ready, or what fabric she would buy online and have ready for us to sew. Sometimes I would take her out to the quilt store. Once I even took her clothes shopping, since the combination of medicines and inactivity had made her grow out of her clothes.
While Nina had a religious background, she hadn’t really grasped just how much Jesus loved her, and I don’t think she really understood that He changes us from the inside, rather than us just trying to be good in order to get to heaven. I was very careful with what I said because I could tell that her faith framework was very important to her. I always just went with the conversation and spoke truth.

She came from a very large family, which seemed to have a weird form of passive aggressive manipulating as their main way of communicating. So, of course, there were many awkward moments as she would tell me what latest drama was going on or how she was dealing with her children. I would try not to give bug eyes, but she was a very good observer. And we got to the point where she would say to me, “You don’t think that’s a good idea, do you?”

Within a year or so, Nina had to go on oxygen. A good friend of mine started coming along to our quilting days, and so Thursdays became a real treat for Nina. As her husband took over more and more of the cooking, sometimes she would tell us that we didn’t have to bring lunch because he had cooked up a treat for us all.

It was a long time before I told Nina that it was a God-thing that I called her in the first place. When it was time for us to move to our next work assignment, she made me a quilt that she named “What For” because, of course, she remembered exactly her response to that initial phone call and was very thankful that I persisted. God used me to bless her by just showing up in her home with love and no expectations.

I wish I could end this with a story of me witnessing some amazing spiritual breakthrough, but that isn’t the case. I do know that I loved on her as her health continued to disintegrate. She passed away a few years ago, and our last contact was by phone. She was drugged up and oxygen deprived and scared. I was able to pray for her and promise her that I would continue to pray for her children. And I came away from the relationship with a realization that there is always more to a person than first meets the eye and that we need to do a whole lot more listening and understanding and appreciating before we can be in position to speak into another’s life.
Hurting Women—Identified by Pain

Lesson 6: Widow of Nain

Time: Jesus’ Second Year of Ministry, ~AD 28

Historical Perspective

Jesus was well into his ministry at this point. He called His disciples to Him (Luke 6:22) and proceeded to give the Sermon on the Mount—an amazing presentation of God’s love and mercy. He then went to Capernaum, continued His ministry to the sick and suffering, and encountered an unusual Roman centurion who loved his servant and the Jewish people. Jesus was amazed at the soldier’s understanding of God’s authority over His people and healed the slave who was in the centurion’s home.

After this miracle, Jesus and His disciples headed to a city called Nain, about 10 miles southeast of Jesus’ hometown of Nazareth. The small town is reached from the west by traveling up a steep road with rock tombs on either side. The road leading from Capernaum to Nain, as Jesus traveled it, enters the town from the northeast past a small burial ground.

Failing to honor the dead was perhaps the greatest lack of respect a Jew could display. Bystanders were obligated to follow a funeral procession, with hired mourners adding to the wails of friends. The body was wrapped in cloth and carried on a bier. After the funeral, mourning continued for 30 days. Paid mourners developed as a profession in Old Testament times but continued into the time of Jesus. As a career that passed from mother to daughter, professional mourners were almost always women. Their mourning was with dirges and eulogies, sometimes accompanied by flutes.

The birth of a son was an occasion of great celebration. In the Jewish culture, giving birth to a son gave a woman value in her husband’s eyes. A baby boy ensured the hope of passing on the family wealth and name. His presence guaranteed social security. It would be his responsibility to care for his aging parents, and especially his mother once widowed. It was thus the hope of every Jewish woman to have a son.

Day One Study

Read the Historical Perspective in the box above, then...

1. Widows in Israel were considered to be under God’s special care. They wore distinctive garb so they could be identified. Read the following verses and note how God intended to care for them through His people and warnings when Israel failed to protect these vulnerable women:
   - Deuteronomy 14:28-29—
   - Deuteronomy 24:19-21—
   - Psalm 68:4-5; 146:9—
   - Isaiah 1:23; 10:1-2—
Two of Israel’s Old Testament prophets (Elijah and Elisha) were known for performing miracles, especially for widows. In fact, Jesus was often compared to one or other of these prophets as He performed miracles during His ministry. So, let’s familiarize ourselves with what the people of Nain already knew.


   • The widow of Zarephath (near Sidon)—

   • The prophet’s widow—

3. Read 1 Kings 17:17-24 and 2 Kings 4:8-37. God also used these two prophets to bring someone back from the dead. Describe what happened and how each woman responded.

   • The Widow of Zarephath—

   • The Shunammite woman—

4. Summarize what you learned about God’s care for women.
Day Two Study

5. Read Luke 7:11-15. Nain is just over the ridge from Shunem. From the text of vv. 11-12, describe the scene.

_Historical Insight:_ Funerals were often held the same day as the death because of the heat and lack of embalming. Also, calling the son a “young man” generally places him at 30 years of age or younger.

6. If you have experienced the pain of someone very close to you, you probably understand the widow’s state of mind when she encountered Jesus. Put yourself in the woman’s place, what could she have been feeling and thinking?

7. The loss of a son in the Jewish culture was a great tragedy. Read Mark 12:38-40. What does Jesus say about any help she might receive from the religious leaders?

8. Read Mark 12:41-44. Jesus was continually “people watching” and teaching His disciples about people. Knowing the plight of all widows, including this one, what did Jesus see in her heart attitude that He wanted His disciples to grasp?
9. **Deeper Discoveries (optional):** Research the plight of widows in the Roman Empire during this time period. What were their options?

10. **Live Out His Love:** The size of the crowd showed the real sympathy of the town for her. Christians often do not know what to say to someone who is grieving, or they say things that hurt more than help (for example, “You can have another child” or “She’s in a better place”). One of the nicest things someone wrote to me in a card after my father died several years ago was this, “Knowing you, I look forward to meeting your dad in heaven one day.” I cherish that card.

- If you have been in a place of grief, what did someone close to you say or do that helped you through it?

- What did someone say or do that added to the pain?

- Research online suggestions for what should be said/done or not be said/done to someone grieving in various situations.

**Day Three Study**

11. Read Luke 7:11-15. Read v. 13 in several translations. Discuss Jesus’ reaction to the widow and, specifically, what He said to her.

12. Jesus could have just passed by and assumed the town would meet her basic needs of food and shelter. But, He didn’t. The scripture says that Jesus felt compassion for the widow. What does this reveal about Him?

13. Compassion is not just sympathy. Compassion takes action to relieve the suffering. Jesus represented His Father’s heart for people. Read Psalm 103:1-14 and 2 Corinthians 1:3-4. What action does our God take as a loving, compassionate God?

14. Read Luke 7:14 again. In the first part of the verse, Jesus does something very unusual for a Jewish teacher. What is it? See also Numbers 19:11.

*Scriptural Insight:* Unclean does not equal sin. To be unclean meant that one was “ceremonially unfit to be with the community... Processes of decay and disease in dead flesh were evident to all. Physical contact with a corpse was a sure mark of uncleanness; normal contacts with the living would have to be curtailed until proper cleansing had been made.” *(NIV Study Bible by Zondervan, note on Numbers 5:2)*

15. What happened next (vv. 14-15)?

16. *Live Out His Love:* Jesus’ heart went out to this grieving widow. Isn’t it comforting to know that when you are in pain, God’s heart goes out to you? He feels your pain. He cares for you. He comforts you. He acts on your behalf. He is not a cold, distant, helpless Deity but is a loving, compassionate God. Jesus personally invites you to bring your deepest longings, heartaches, and anxieties to Him today, just as men and women did in the ancient past. Are you convinced that you can go to Him and openly express your deepest needs? If possible, share a situation in your life when you felt the compassion of Christ.
Day Four Study

17. Read Luke 7:11-17. Jesus gave three gifts—life to the son, the son to the mother, and hope to both plus the town. Discuss the results of Jesus’ miracle in the days that followed. See also Matthew 1:22-23 and Isaiah 35:3-6.

18. We are not told why Jesus went to Nain, but the timing of His approach with the funeral procession would seem to be a God-arranged “divine appointment.” Jesus’ encounter with the widow of Nain ended up touching many lives. List all the groups and/or persons who have been affected by this “divine appointment.”

Scriptural Insight: In the ministries of Elijah, Elisha and Jesus, we see that they were directed by God toward helping specific women, raised dead boys who were only sons of the women, and acted out of compassion for the women. In all three incidents, the sons were given back to their mothers. All three women had a story of God’s faithfulness to tell to their neighbors.

19. Live Out His Love: Jesus actively did what He had the power to do to alleviate this woman’s suffering. So should we do what we have the power to do to alleviate human suffering, even if it is just bringing a meal, visiting, calling, providing clothes, or just listening and giving counsel and prayer. In 1 Corinthians, we are referred to as “ambassadors” of Christ and of the Gospel. Share a time when you felt God sent you on a “divine appointment” to someone who needed you at that time. You may have the opportunity even today to encourage someone in your group!
Historical Perspective
After two years of ministering in Galilee, Jesus returned to Judea and Perea, territories near Jerusalem, to minister there. In Jerusalem, He healed a man by the Pool of Siloam and told a parable about Himself as the Good Shepherd who would give His life for His sheep. Somewhere in Judea, He answered the question, "Who is my neighbor?" with a parable about a good-hearted Samaritan who helped a fellow traveler. After that, He went to Bethany.

Bethany was a small village on the southeastern slopes of the Mount of Olives about two miles east of Jerusalem on the Jericho Road. It still exists today. Martha, Mary, Lazarus and "Simon the leper" lived there. The Mount of Olives, from which Jesus could see Jerusalem, is about 2 miles long and has three peaks. The modern road from Jericho to Jerusalem still passes along its southern slopes. Rising about 100 feet above Jerusalem, it gives an unforgettable view of the city, which is to the west. (For more information on Hospitality in Jesus' time, see page 15.)

A burial cave could have been a natural cave or a tomb cut into the rock. A large round stone was often rolled across the entrance of such a tomb after burial. Upon death, the body was sealed inside the tomb. After the flesh had decayed and only the skeleton remained, the bones were placed in a small box called an ossuary, which was then placed on a shelf carved out of the tomb wall. In this way, a whole family could be buried in the same tomb.

Because of the warm climate in Palestine, burial usually took place the same day as death. But before the funeral, the body was prepared for burial. Rarely did the immediate family become involved in preparing the body for burial. Friends and other family members washed the body and clipped the hair and nails. Strips of linen were then wrapped around the body. Spices (hyssop, rose oil, aloe, and myrrh) were placed between these strips. Placing a linen napkin over the face, the body was laid on an open bier and carried to the tomb.

Day One Study
Read the Historical Perspective above, then…

1. Read Luke 10:38-42. What was Martha's initial attitude upon seeing Jesus and His companions?

2. As manager of the home, what might have been Martha's initial emotions and thoughts at this time? Consider what is involved in hosting that size of a crowd.
3. How does her attitude change as time progresses? What became Martha’s focus? What does she do?

*From the Greek:* The Greek word translated *distracted* in Luke 10:40 means “drawn around” as with anxiety, distracted in mind and in looks. Martha came to Jesus, literally “stepped up to and burst in upon” Jesus.

4. Toward whom was Martha’s anger directed and why?

5. Where was Mary’s focus at this moment? Explain your answer.

6. Discuss Jesus’ response to Martha. What was Jesus trying to teach her? In other words, what was HIS focus?
7. **Live Out His Love:** We’ll discuss more about the differences between Mary and Martha later in this lesson. For now, let’s focus on what Jesus was teaching Martha about neglecting the things distracting her from doing what is truly the most important. Read the following article and answer the question at the end.

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**Planning Neglect Leaves Time for God!!**

In her book, "A Practical Guide to Prayer," Dorothy Haskins tells about a noted concert violinist who was asked the secret of her mastery of the instrument. The woman answered the question with two words, "PLANNED NEGLECT."

Then she explained, "There were many things that used to demand my time. When I went to my room after breakfast, I made my bed, straightened the room, dusted and did whatever seemed necessary. When I finished my work, I turned to my violin practice. That system prevented me from accomplishing what I should on the violin. So I reversed things. I deliberately planned to neglect everything else until my practice period was complete. And that program of planned neglect is the secret of my success."

This same principle can be helpful as we plan our lives: quiet time with the Lord, time with our family, professional development, time with our spouse, a hobby. There are many good things we can choose to do with our day.

Unless we discipline ourselves and make a deliberate effort, good things will keep us from those life concerns that are top priority. The tyranny of the urgent robs us of spending time with God in meditation and prayer, time with our spouse, our children and just time by ourselves. We squeeze these ultimate relationships into the "leftover" moments in our day, when we are rushed or exhausted.

In Ephesians 5:15-17, Paul calls on us to use our time wisely. "Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is." Jesus urges us in the Sermon on the Mount to put God first. "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Matthew 6:33.

Take some time to look at your day. Ask yourself some questions, "What are the important things in my life? What one thing contributes more to the quality of my life than all the other concerns? What is my number one ability, and how am I developing it? Where does my husband/wife/children/friends/walk with God/recreation fit into my day?"

The "laser-lane" lifestyle of the [city] is full of the urgent. We need to reflect on our value system and determine what "PLANNED NEGLECT" we need to practice in order to keep the ultimate relationships in priority positions in our lives. (Mike Danchak, *Dallas Morning News*)

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How would “Planning Neglect” in your life help you have a focused time on God?
Day Two Study

8. Read John 11:1-16. Mary and Martha sent word to Jesus that Lazarus was ill, yet they did not ask Him to come to Bethany though they probably expected it (John 11:21,32). Knowing the need, what did Jesus decide to do?

9. Two days later, Jesus makes an announcement. The loose translation of vv. 6-10 is, "We’re burning daylight. Let’s go!" Why did Jesus wait two days to now be in such a hurry?

10. Read John 11:17-37. Mary and Martha were both experiencing grief. How did each deal with her emotions? How did each respond to the news that Jesus was near?

11. Notice that Mary and Martha both have the same response in v. 21 (Martha) and 32 (Mary), except that Martha went a step further. Both sisters already knew that Jesus had brought two people back from the dead (Mark 5; Luke 7). But, neither of those had been laid in a tomb yet. Knowing women, what does Martha really want Jesus to do?

12. Read John 11:21-27 again. How does Martha’s answer reveal that she had also been listening to Jesus’ teaching?

**Think About It:** Martha’s confession of faith is similar to Peter’s in Matthew 16:16. In fact, what Martha says is even more amazing because she makes her declaration with her brother dead now for four days, already in the grave! Her response to Jesus’ question, “Do you believe this?” is a firm, “Yes, Lord.” The emphasis in the Greek is that this is her firm and settled faith.

13. Read John 11:33-35. When Jesus saw Mary and the people surrounding her weeping, how did He respond and what does this reveal about Him?
**From the Greek:** The Greek verb translated “deeply moved” can be translated either “groaned” or “angered.” It seems to connote anger or sternness. It is used only 5 times in the New Testament, each time of the Lord’s words or feelings (Matthew 9:30; Mark 1:43; 14:5; John 11:33,38) ... The best explanation is that Jesus was angry at the tyranny of Satan who had brought sorrow and death to people through sin. (Walvoord and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*, p. 314)

**Think About It:** John 11:35 is the shortest verse in the Bible, yet it conveys to us so much about the love of Jesus. Jesus wept; He shed tears. He identified with us as humans so much that He could express deep human sympathy from His heart with Martha and Mary.

14. Read John 11:4,11,23. What did Jesus plan to do to meet the sisters’ needs and heal their hurts?

15. Read John 11:38-45. Describe the scene as though you were there watching it. [It’s okay to picture Jesus smiling as He greets Lazarus.]

16. Discuss, in particular, Martha’s objection and Jesus’ response to her in vv. 39-40. Do you think He knows her pretty well by now?

17. **Live Out His Love:** From John 11:3,5 we can be confident that Jesus truly loved Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. They were confident in His love for them and in His power to heal. He could have healed Lazarus from a distance the moment He received the news as He had done many times before this (for example, Mark 7:24-30 and John 4:46-53). Yet, He didn’t. Instead, He allowed these friends whom He loved dearly to endure pain and suffering for several days because there was a greater good they could not see at the time. Jesus loved them and hurt right along with them. If you think that you are suffering because you’ve done something wrong to make God stop loving you—that’s a lie! Erase it from the “auto-fill” workings of your mind. Replace it with these four truths you can count on:

- Jesus loves you.
- Jesus knows what is going on in your life.
- Jesus can do something about it.
- You can trust His goodness in whatever He chooses to do.

Now, handwrite these four truths somewhere to etch them in your mind. He may not bring back your dead loved one or heal your sickness or make everything right. His goodness will choose to do whatever is best for you, for others, and for God’s glory.
Day Three Study


_Think About It:_ This is the first time someone who has been in the grave is brought back to life—a picture of what will soon happen to Jesus.

19. Read John 11:45-57 and 12:9-11. Not everyone was so pleased to hear about Lazarus being restored from the dead. Discuss what happens in these verses and how it affects Jesus’ ministry (v. 54).

After the raising of Lazarus, Jesus made His departure. But, after a short stay in Ephraim (15 miles away), He returned to Bethany to stay for His last days. On Sunday, Jesus entered Jerusalem triumphantly, riding on a donkey. On Monday, He pronounced a curse on a barren fig tree and drove out the merchants and moneychangers from the temple. On Tuesday, He answered a question about paying taxes to Caesar and pointed out a widow giving her small coins in the temple. That evening, He taught His disciples on the Mount of Olives. Then He went to a dinner with His friends in Bethany, at the home of Simon whose life had also been changed. Four people whose lives are undeniably touched and changed by Jesus gratefully honored Him...

20. Read Mark 14:1-11 and John 12:1-11. Jesus and His disciples are now dining at the home of Simon the Leper (who must have been healed by now). Lazarus is there as well as Martha and Mary. Describe the scene.
21. How did each of the sisters show their gratitude to Jesus for giving life back to their brother?

• Martha—

• Mary—

**Historical Insight:** What is spikenard? Nard is a fragrant ointment made from the shaggy roots and lower stems of a plant growing in the Himalayan Mountains and other high altitude places in northern India. Cheaper varieties come from other countries. It is used to anoint royalty. According to one historian, it was very expensive. It was imported in sealed alabaster boxes or flasks that were opened only on special occasions. Also, anointing was normally done on the head. Mary apparently anointed both Jesus’ head and feet.

22. As you learned in Lesson Two, this perfume might have represented to Mary her inheritance, her dowry or a lifetime of savings. It was likely her most precious possession. And, respectable women did not unbind their hair in public. Therefore, what does her "gift" indicate about her character, her intuition, and her love?

**Think About It:** Mary perceived with her delicate woman’s intuition what the apostles failed to understand though repeatedly and plainly told to them by Jesus—His impending execution.

23. Jesus accepted Mary’s act of worship. The disciples did not. Discuss their response to Mary’s worship and sacrifice. [Note what is revealed about Judas.]

24. Jesus was not afraid of the controversy surrounding this incident. Using Mark 14:6-9, write Jesus’ answer to the disciples’ objections.
25. Read Mark 14:8 again. What do you think Jesus meant by saying, “she did what she could” (literally, "what she had she did")?

26. **Live Out His Love**: Jesus said that Mary did what she as a woman in her culture with her resources could do for Him. He called that “a beautiful thing to Me.” As a woman in your life circumstances, in what ways could Jesus say, “she did what she could” about you when it comes to showing gratitude to Him? How does your heart show gratitude to Him? Feel free to respond in any creative means you choose to use—prose, poetry, song, art, prayer.

**Day Four Study**

27. Jesus and His disciples often stayed in Bethany when they were near Jerusalem (Matthew 21:17 and Mark 11:11,12), probably with Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. They knew the joy of Jesus' private company and His love (John 11:3,5,11). What does this tell you about Jesus' needs for friendship and His relationship with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus?

*Think About It*: If the perfect Son of God needed friends, how much more do we need them!! Lazarus and Simon, both men healed by Jesus, gave a dinner in His honor at a time when the Pharisees were hunting Him like an animal. Jesus knew his friends' home was a place of welcome, protection, rest and provision. Where do you go when you feel "hunted" by the world?
28. Christianity is Christ. It’s all about a relationship with Him. How did Martha and Mary blossom in their relationship with Jesus over time? What changed? What stayed the same? What showed that they listened to His teaching?

29. **Live Out His Love:** Mary and Martha were created with different personalities and behavioral tendencies. Jesus understood that about them. He understands that about you as well, quirks and all. He knows how to lead you. Think about your tendencies to control a situation or not, how quickly you shed tears or not, how you speak before you think. He knows you well and still loves you dearly. He hurts when you hurt and rejoices when you rejoice. He knows how to respond to your needs, which will be personally applied and different from how He responds to your “sister’s” needs.

- Are you okay with that? Or, are you still telling Him how He should do things, telling Him how He should be God?

- Reread John 11:39-40. If Martha insisted on having her own way, what would she have missed? Apply Jesus’ answer to Martha to your own expectations from Him. How will you let Him lead you?

30. **Live Out His Love:** Mary and Martha could serve Him, love Him, and worship Him in different ways—all equally as valuable. That is the same for us, too. Isn't that wonderful? We don't have to be alike to be able to love and serve Him. This is how it is in the Body of Christ. Have you been made to feel guilty for being more of a “doer” than a “feeler?” Look at Romans 12:6-8 for a list of some spiritual gifts. Some are “doer” gifts (teaching, leadership, administration); some are “feeler” gifts (mercy, helps). The Holy Spirit through Paul says that all are needed in the local church.

- What spiritual gift(s) do you think the Holy Spirit has given to you? You can take an online assessment at gifts.churchgrowth.org to help you find out.

- How are you using your gift to help others get to know Jesus or to grow in their faith if already Christians?
LIVE OUT HIS LOVE
Devoted Women—Identified by Faithfulness

Lesson 8: Mary the Magdalene

Time: Jesus’ Third Year of Ministry, ~AD 29

Historical Perspective
As Christ continued His public ministry, more and more people began to travel with Him from one town to the next. Some were no doubt just curious onlookers. But others followed because they could not help but accompany the person who had so radically changed their lives. Mary, the Magdalene, was among the latter group. The name Mary is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Miriam. Miriam was Moses’ older sister and one of the leaders God gave to Israel (see Exodus 15:20-21; Micah 6:4).

Magdala is thought to have been a small village on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, southwest of Capernaum (see map below). It was about three miles north of Tiberias where the ruler of Galilee, Herod Antipas, had his capital. Once famous for its fine woolens and dyed products (the dye came from shellfish caught in its waters), Magdala had as many as 4,000 inhabitants with 80 weavers’ shops and 300 shops that sold pigeons for sacrifices. The Hebrew name Magdala is associated with the word migdol, which meant “a watchtower.” It was also known by two other names—Magadan and Dalmanutha. In Jesus’ day it was primarily a Gentile city, as its horse and chariot racetrack indicates. Two gospel writers record Jesus going there (Matthew 15:39-16:4; Mark 8:10-12).

Day One Study
Read the Historical Perspective in the box above, then…

1. Read Luke 8:1-3; Mark 15:40-41; Matthew 27:55-56 and John 19:25. List every reference to women, including names and any information given about them (family associations, etc.).
2. Jesus did not use daily miracles to provide for His own needs and for those of His 12 disciples. For those who traveled with Jesus, list all that ministering to and providing for Him might have looked like for these women as they traveled throughout Galilee and the 70 miles to Jerusalem.

**Think About It:** Why didn’t Jesus miraculously provide food for His party? Jesus set the precedent at His wilderness testing when He refused Satan’s challenge to turn “stones into bread.” He would not use His power to provide for His own needs. Instead, He lived as a man daily to identify with all of humanity, gave opportunity for men and women to support His ministry, and set an example for later apostles and missionaries to be supported by those who benefit from their preaching. (Adapted from *Ministry, Money & Women*, Bob Deffinbaugh, accessed on Bible.org)

3. Review the *Historical Perspectives* in Lessons One and Four. How did Jesus' acceptance of what these women did for Him go contrary to the culture?

4. Why did they do it? And, how did traveling with Jesus also benefit them?

**Historical Insight:** “I am convinced that these women did not follow our Lord to ‘have a ministry’ as much as they followed Christ to be with Him. Being with Christ, these women were, like Him, sensitive to needs (even the hunger of those in the group) and to meeting these needs. Thus, these women were with Christ and also acted as He did in the face of needs.” (*Ministry, Money & Women*, Bob Deffinbaugh, accessed on Bible.org)

5. **Live Out His Love:** Jesus intentionally taught everyone who followed Him, including women, what it means to know, follow, depend upon, and obey Him. And, women who have been forgiven and healed much want to give back to the one who has set them free from their pain. In what ways do you give back to the One who has set you free? In other words, how do you support Jesus’ ministry today?
Day Two Study


7. From our previous study of the Canaanite woman in Lesson Six, what symptoms might Mary have displayed while being demon-possessed? [Note: there is no scriptural evidence that she had been immoral. A church leader around 500 AD associated Mary with the immoral woman in Luke 7:36-50, thus unfairly adding that stigma onto her character.]

8. Explain how her plight as a demon-possessed woman might have affected her life socially, spiritually, and emotionally.


10. Mary Magdalene experienced firsthand the events of the last week of Jesus' life—His triumphal entry, the cleansing of the Temple, verbal combat with the Pharisees, and the agony of His arrest and trial. What range of emotions must Mary Magdalene have felt through the last week of Christ's life?
Day Three Study

11. Read Matthew 27:55-61; Mark 15:40-16:1 and Luke 23:49-24:1. Discuss how Mary Magdalene and the other women continued to minister to Jesus on the day of His trial and crucifixion. What information is given that gives insight to their strength of character during a stressful, emotional time?

12. Compare this with what His male disciples did at His arrest and trial in Matthew 26:56.

13. Read the following passages about Jesus’ resurrection to fill out the chart below:

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<td>Who saw Jesus &amp; how they responded</td>
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14. Because of a twisted interpretation of the Mosaic law, the rabbinical leaders taught that women were uneducable. They were also considered unreliable as courtroom witnesses. How was God’s use of women as reliable witnesses revealed in these verses? Why do you think God entrusted the spectacular news of the resurrection to women?

_Historical Insight:_ “That a woman would be the first to see Him is an evidence of Jesus’ love as well as a mark of the narrative’s historicity. No Jewish author in the ancient world would have invented a story with a woman as the first witness to this most important event.” (Walvoord and Zuck, _The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament_, p. 342)

15. **Live Out His Love:** Jesus trusted that the women would do what He asked them to do. He has entrusted us to spread the good news as well. Write out the simple gospel message below as you would share it with someone. For ideas, see “Ways to Explain the Gospel” on page 109.

Day Four Study

17. Read John 20:14-18. Discuss Jesus’ conversation with her and Mary’s response to Him. [Note: “Rabboni” in v. 16 is personal, meaning my teacher.]

**Focus on the Meaning:** Mary may have embraced Jesus physically [as did the women in Matthew 28:9-10] for the Lord responded, “Do not hold onto Me, for I have not yet returned to my Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them...” These words spoke of a new relationship, new relatives, and a new responsibility...A new relationship will begin with His Ascension and the gift of the Holy Spirit to the church. The new relatives are the disciples whom Jesus called His brothers...Believers in Jesus become a part of Jesus’ family with God as their Father. Mary’s new responsibility was to testify to His risen presence. She was the recipient of four special graces: to see angels; to see Jesus risen; to be the first to see Him alive; and to be a proclaimer of the good news—the latter being something all Christians share with her. (Walvoord and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*, pp. 342-343)

18. Why can we assume that Mary Magdalene was probably single?

19. Considering the life of a single woman without children, what could be some advantages of being single as she serves the Lord? Disadvantages?

20. **Live Out His Love:** The local church often undervalues single woman, especially the career single who has never been married nor has any children. If you are single, how do you feel included or not included in your church’s ministry to women? In what ways might a single woman feel left out of ministry opportunities at your church? Is there a single woman who might need your friendship? If you are single, what can you do to let the married women know you want to be included? Discuss ways to be more inclusive of those who are not married and/or mothers.
Lesson 9: Mary, Jesus’ Mom

Time: Jesus’ Life, ~5 B.C.-30 A.D.

Historical Perspective

By the time of Jesus’ birth, rabbis had fixed the minimum age for marriage at twelve for girls and thirteen for boys. Normally, the fathers arranged the marriage without consulting either the boy or the girl involved. When the marriage was agreed upon, the groom gave presents to the bride’s family. The Jewish betrothal period was a stricter legal relationship than modern engagements, and sexual relations were not allowed. If the wedding was abandoned, a financial penalty would be imposed on the person responsible.

Jesus’ mother Mary was raised in a time when women did not have the same rights as men. Women were treated as possessions and listed along with a man’s property. Wives referred to their husbands as “master” and lord. A woman could not divorce her husband. Daughters and wives did not inherit property from their father or husband unless there was no male heir. However, some women did have respect and influence, like the Old Testament women Sarah, Miriam, Deborah and Abigail. Daughters seemed to share in family life as much as sons, such as participating in religious festivals. The Ten Commandments called for equal honor to be shown to both parents. Women were subject to the law with identical penalties as male offenders.

Jesus did not reinforce the practice of treating women as second-class citizens or as possessions. His example demonstrates His equal love and compassion for women as well as men, including His own mother. After studying this lesson, you will see that Mary was an ordinary woman of faith. She gave birth to and raised the boy Jesus, but then she needed to believe in Him with the same saving faith that you and I must have for salvation.

If you are doing this study in a group, please remember that others in your group may have different perspectives about Mary. Be sensitive to that and focus on what the Scriptures say about her.

Day One Study

Read the Historical Perspective in the box above, then...

1. Read Luke 1:26-38. What facts are given about Mary in vv. 26-30?
From the Greek: The angel Gabriel said that Mary was highly “favored” and that she had found “favor” with God, both words related to the Greek karis, often translated in the New Testament as grace, meaning “undeserved favor, a gift.” Grace carried the notion of joy, delight, and kindness. What does this tell you about God’s choice of Mary to carry His Son in her womb?

2. What did Gabriel tell Mary about the child she would carry? To see the prophecies God was fulfilling through her, read Isaiah 7:14; 9:6-7 and 2 Samuel 7:11-12,16.

3. What does Mary’s response reveal about her?

4. What news does the angel give Mary to bolster her faith in what God’s power can do?

5. Read Luke 1:39-56. Mary left Nazareth and traveled 70 miles to visit her relative. Describe Mary’s encounter with Elizabeth (pregnant with John) in vv. 39-45 and how God encourages both Mary and Elizabeth at this time.
6. Mary’s song of praise and gratitude has strong similarities with Hannah’s song (1 Samuel 2:1-10). Focusing on Luke 1:46-56, what jumps out at you that reveals Mary’s heart and her knowledge of God and His Word?

**Historical Insight:** This hymn of prairie is known as the Magnificat because in the Latin Vulgate translation the opening word is *Magnificat*, which means “glorifies.” (NIV Study Bible. Zondervan, note on Luke 1:46-55)

7. What does the expression "God, my Savior" indicate that Mary knew about herself?

8. Mary declares in Luke 1:48: "From now on all generations will call me blessed (NIV)." The adjective “blessed” is translated from a Greek word that means, “pronounced happy.” She gives one reason in v. 49. What is the reason? Based on what you have studied so far, for what other reasons might all generations call her blessed?

9. **Live Out His Love:** Could God have carried out His plan of salvation without Mary? The angel Gabriel tells us, "For nothing is impossible with God (Luke 1:37)." Memorize this verse and share any examples in your life when God has demonstrated this fact to you.

Day Two Study

10. Read Matthew 1:18-25. How was God faithful to Mary in His provision of a husband for her and father for Jesus?
11. Joseph was a godly man who chose not to publicly divorce or disgrace Mary when he found out she was pregnant. Read John 8:41 (a possible slander against Jesus’ birth). The people of Nazareth could count months between when Joseph took her as his wife and the baby’s birth. What shadow did Mary live under all her life?

12. **Live Out His Love:** Have you or anyone you have known been in a position of social disgrace in which God used it for His higher purposes? Describe what happened.

It was late in her pregnancy when "Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken...And everyone went to his own town to register" (Luke 2:1-3). Though women 12 years and older were required to pay a poll tax and register, Mary could have chosen to not go to Bethlehem and let Joseph enroll both of them in the census. They likely knew the prophecy from Micah 5:2. She chose to go, knowing that their baby would be born in Bethlehem.

13. Read Luke 2:1-7 and Micah 5:2. Imagine what it was like to travel for several days in late pregnancy on foot or on a donkey then to give birth in a cave/stable, with perhaps no woman to attend her. Describe this whole experience for Mary.

14. Read Luke 2:8-20. Notice God’s idea of a grand birth announcement! What further confirmation coming from the shepherds does God give to Mary and Joseph about their new baby and His purpose (v. 11 especially)?

**Think About It:** We consider Jesus’ birth in a stable/cave rather than a nice comfy house as something bad. Consider, however, how Jesus “lying in a manger” would make Him more accessible to the shepherds. God knew what He was doing!
15. Look at 2:19, 51. Discuss what is said about Mary and what that likely means.

16. Read Luke 2:21-40. Mary and Joseph did was required by the Jewish Law 40 days after the birth of a baby. And, God used this experience of their faithfulness to Him to give them more confirmation of their son’s purpose. Remembering what the angel had told Mary, discuss what Simeon and Anna added to Mary’s understanding of her son’s purpose and future.

17. Read Matthew 2:1-23. Luke 2:39 skips over this episode. Discuss what Mary experienced during these first few years of Jesus’ life.

18. **Live Out His Love:** Think about Mary’s experience being a new mom, receiving expensive gifts from majestic strangers, the danger posed to her son by her own king, quick trip to live in a strange place based on her husband’s dream, and finally being able to go back home. Lots of ups and downs following God’s protection and leading. When have you felt God’s protection and/or leading during difficult times in your life?
Day Three Study

19. Mary and Joseph were faithful but not perfect parents. Read Luke 2:41-50. Jesus is twelve years old. Discuss the experiences of the boy Jesus and his parents as described in this passage.
   - Jesus—
   - Mary & Joseph—

20. Of what did Jesus’ answer remind His parents?

21. Read Matthew 13:55-56 and John 7:3-5. What other children did Mary have in addition to Jesus?

   **Scriptural Insight:** There is no Scriptural evidence that these children were not Mary's natural children. See Matthew 1:25 and Luke 2:7. The expression in the Greek "her firstborn" means that she naturally had other children afterwards. Otherwise, the Greek phrase for "only son" would have been used as in John 3:16 and Luke 7 (the Widow of Nain).

22. Read Luke 2:40,51-52. In what ways were Jesus’ growing up experiences normal for a human boy? What does this reveal to you about Mary's mothering?
23. **Live Out His Love:** How, if at all, were the basics of the Christian faith taught and reinforced in your home while you were growing up? If you have children, how are you teaching them to have faith in Jesus Christ and helping them to grow in their faith?

Day Four Study

24. Read John 2:1-11 recounting a time early in Jesus’ ministry. Discuss the interaction between Mary and her now adult son.

25. Read Mark 3:20-21,31-35. In His response to His family members who had come to “take charge of Him” for His own welfare, Jesus reveals His priorities. How does Jesus' understanding of His own priorities affect the relationship between His mother and Himself?

26. **Live Out His Love:** There are two issues at work here, both creating tension.

   - On the one hand, Jesus had to take a stand opposite of what His family desired. Have you been in such a situation? How have you responded? If this is still a point of conflict, what should you do?

   - The other issue is that of Jesus' siblings questioning His motives and behavior. Have you ever questioned some dynamic Christian's motives or been envious of his/her walk with God? Is this what His siblings could have been experiencing? How did you deal with this situation?

27. Read John 19:25-27. What does Mary's presence at the cross reveal about her?
28. Just before His death, Jesus, as the oldest son, committed His mother’s future provision to the disciple John (a nephew) but not to one of her own sons. What could be the reason for this? For help, review John 7:3-5.

**Scriptural Insight:** In 1 Corinthians 15:7, Paul writes that Jesus did appear to His brother James who believed, became the leader of the Jerusalem Church (Acts 15:13), and wrote the New Testament book of *James*. Another brother, Jude, also believed and authored the New Testament book of *Jude*.

29. Read Acts 1:12-14. The prayer group meeting together after Jesus’ resurrection and ascension included Mary. What were they waiting to receive, and what will they be empowered to do after receiving it?

**Think About It:** We are to view her as one who revered the Lord and did His will, who put her trust in Him and, therefore, was filled with His joy. Since Jesus’ death and resurrection, she shares in the same salvation as the rest of believers.

30. **Live Out His Love:** Mary was a normal human just as we are. Summarize Mary’s character qualities revealed in this lesson. Mary’s character is attainable to us as well. What qualities of this godly woman would you like to have?

As believers, we have the same Holy Spirit Mary had to help us develop godly character. Trust in Him to be faithful to complete the good work He began in you, submit to His will and fix your eyes on Jesus the author and perfecter of your faith (Hebrews 12:2).

**Historical Insight:** When did the view of Mary as something more than an ordinary godly woman begin? A document (called the Gospel of James, not considered to be Scripture) written in the late second century AD (150 years after Mary lived) created a whole scenario for Mary. Other information about Mary’s life began to be circulated in the 400s AD declaring Mary to have been a child prodigy who made a vow of virginity at the age of 3, remaining in the Temple where she had continual visions and angelic visits. These conjectures (and others added to them) became tradition and eventually “fact.”
Historical Perspective
Perhaps one of the most startling cultural changes as a result of Christ's ministry was the change in the status of women. Prior to Christ's coming, women were seen as little more than chattel, with no legal rights to speak of except by virtue of marriage. With the introduction of the Church, the true “Body of Christ,” women were seen as founders of churches (Lydia), disciples of Christ (Mary Magdalene), and prophetesses (Philip's daughters). While the dominant culture still held a less than liberated view of women, it seems that in the early church, women were disciples and fellow saints who were held in high esteem by Christians.

Tabitha was one such woman. Though little is known of her background, the account of her restoration from death back to life in Acts is proof not only of Christ's continuing ministry to women but also a lesson to us all of the impact one person's life can have in the everyday “good deeds” we so often take for granted.

Joppa was on the southern border of the Palestinian region called the Plain of Sharon, the largest coastal plain of Palestine. Its rich red sandy soil, now under extensive irrigation, contains citrus groves and commercial farms. Five streams and countless underground springs water its surface. Set on a rock that rises about 125 feet above sea level and juts out into the Mediterranean, it had an excellent natural harbor. It was the main seaport of Judah, receiving cedar logs floated down from Lebanon to build the temples of both Solomon (~970 B.C.) and Zerubbabel (~500 B.C.). Under Roman rule, Joppa became part of Herod the Great's territory. Because the people of Joppa hated Herod the Great, he built Caesarea some 40 miles to the north, and Joppa declined in importance. The city of Joppa today is Jaffa, a suburb of Tel Aviv.

Day One Study
Read the Historical Perspective in the box above, then...

1. Read Luke 8:49-56. What did Jesus do when He entered the house? Who was present with Him in the room?

2. What other two incidents have we studied where Jesus restored someone from the dead (Lessons 6 and 7)? Who was present with Him?
Jesus challenged His followers to become “fishers of people” (Mark 1:17). He spent His second and third year of ministry equipping them with the tools they needed to do this. Reading through the gospels, you will see Jesus preparing them to teach the gospel message, to have compassion on people and meet their needs, and to interact with different kinds of people—both the faithful and the skeptics. As Jesus traveled with His followers, He let them take part in His ministry to prepare them for their own work. They watched Him engage different kinds of people—locals, foreigners, preachers, prostitutes, poor, rich, distraught parents, and more. He sent them to take the gospel to nearby towns and practice what they learned.

   - What authority were they given?
   - What were they tasked to do?
   - What did they experience?

4. Read Luke 10:1-2. Jesus sent them out again along with many other followers to once again practice what they learned. Jesus has gone back to heaven. Just before He left, He commissioned His followers to do something. Read Matthew 28:18-19. What were all followers commissioned to do?

5. Jesus’ disciples had the authority to preach the gospel and to heal—both for the purpose of making disciples. Read Acts 3:1-10. Describe what happens in this scene.

6. Remember that the purpose of miracles is to authenticate the messenger and the message being proclaimed as well as to show God’s compassion on His people. Read Acts 3:11-26. What happened right after the beggar was healed and how did Peter take advantage of this opportunity given him by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the truth about Jesus?

Think About It: “Evangelism is not about you involving Him in your outreach efforts. It is Him involving you in His...Only the Holy Spirit can open the eyes of unbelievers to the truth of the gospel...It is the job of believers to communicate the gospel. It is the job of the Holy Spirit to convert the heart.” (David Souther, EvanTell)
7. **Live Out His Love:** Believers communicate the gospel in several ways. Two of the most powerful are through sharing the gospel message itself and through sharing one’s own faith story. People can reject the facts or logic of the gospel, but it’s very hard to argue with someone about their experience with knowing Christ. If you were given the opportunity by the Holy Spirit to share with a non-Christian about your relationship with Jesus, what would you say? Start now by sharing at least two ways that knowing Jesus has made a difference in your life, given you hope, restored something lost, etc.

Day Two Study

8. Read Acts 7:59-8:4. Describe what happened in the early church after the stoning of Stephen and how God made something that looked “bad” work towards good from His perspective.

9. Jesus confronted Saul and gave him a new life’s direction (Acts 9:1-30). [Note: Saul was his Hebrew name; Paul was his Roman name by which we know him best.] Paul responded with faith and embraced his new life. Read Acts 9:31, which refers to a time at least 4 years after Stephen’s stoning. What were the benefits of a “time of peace” for the Church?

10. Read Acts 9:32-35. Refer to the map at right. Where was Lydda in relation to Jerusalem? What does this indicate about the spread of the Gospel?
From the Greek: The word “saint” comes from the Greek word *hagios*, “holy,” meaning separated from sin and dedicated to God. All believers are called “holy ones” (*hagioi*) based upon their faith in Jesus Christ, not on any exceptional behavior. A saint is identified by position, what God declares to be true about you. Every believer is one of God’s saints, totally loved and accepted by him—considered a saint of God by position, not by behavior. (Vines Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, pages 307-308)

11. Discuss how long Aeneas was bedridden, what Peter said to Aeneas, and the outcome. Note: Sharon was a neighboring village.

12. **Live Out His Love:** A man’s life was changed. Others saw it and turned to the Lord. They believed the message about Jesus Christ. Continue to work on your own faith story. Remember what your life was like before you trusted in Christ. Or, perhaps you trusted in Christ as a child so you don’t remember, but later you made the choice to follow Him with your life and experienced His love for you. What did you hear and feel when you heard the gospel message and believed? Or, when you made that choice to be His disciple? Think about how you would share that with another woman who doesn’t know Christ and hasn’t experienced His love for her yet.

Day Three Study

13. Read Acts 9:36-43. Locate Joppa on the map (Day Two Study), about 12 miles from Lydda. Assume news spread pretty quickly back then although maybe not quite as fast as it does today. What could the people in Joppa have known already about Peter?

14. Describe Tabitha (Dorcas, in the Greek) as a woman as well as what happened to her.
**Scriptural Insight:** In Acts 9:36, Tabitha is specifically called a *disciple*. Jesus Christ calls every believer to intentionally follow him as His disciple. A disciple is an active follower or learner. A disciple studies the teachings of another person whom she respects and applies those teachings to her life. To follow Jesus as His disciple means that you make the choice to learn from Jesus through what is taught in the Bible and, in dependent obedience, apply those teachings to your life.

15. How did Tabitha’s life reflect that she was a disciple and was benefiting those around her?


17. Compare what Peter did regarding Tabitha with Jesus’ healing of Jairus’ daughter—similarities and differences (see Question #1). This is the first recorded instance in the early church of someone being raised from the dead.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jesus</th>
<th>Peter</th>
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<tr>
<td>What was done the same?</td>
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18. Read 1 Peter 4:8-11. Discuss how to serve others in Jesus’ name and the ultimate goal of doing so.

19. **Live Out His Love**: Part of your faith story is how you are living it out on a daily basis. Tabitha was a woman who knew her gifts and used them to minister to the saints in Joppa—her “sphere of influence.” Reflect on one or both of the following:

   - **Your influence on someone**—Are you aware of your gifts and how to use them to serve others? Share an instance in your life when your serving in Jesus’ name made a difference for someone in your “sphere of influence.” Recall the situation, your own feelings, how knowing Jesus motivated you to serve, her response, etc.

   - **Someone’s influence on you**—Share an instance when someone else using her gifts of serving in Jesus’ name made a significant impact on you in your faith. Recall the situation, your own feelings, how knowing Jesus motivated her to serve, your response, etc.

**Day Four Study**

20. Read Acts 9:36-43. What effect did the restoration of Tabitha from death to life have on the people of Joppa?
21. **Live Out His Love:** A man’s life was changed. A woman’s life was restored. Others saw it and turned to the Lord. They believed the message about Jesus. Each had something they could easily tell with just a few words. You can create your own faith story beginning with just 3 words. Here’s how:

- Choose the first word to describe your life, feelings, situation, or thoughts before trusting in Christ. Examples: angry, independent, manipulative, miserable, hopeless, empty, addicted, me-centered, restless, striving, confused, insecure, worried, childlike.

  **Word #1**

- Choose the second word to describe how you came to trust in Christ. Examples: creation, studied, concert, grew, Bible, friend, trouble, observation, evangelist, spouse, loved, teacher, parent.

  **Word #2**

- Choose the third word to describe your life, feelings, situation, or thoughts since trusting in Christ. Examples: peaceful, loving, trusting, freedom, servant, hopeful, compassionate, confident.

  **Word #3**

Using your three words, create 1-2 sentences for each word—just a brief explanation how each word relates to your story. 3 words + 1 or 2 sentences per word = 3–6 sentences to tell your story. How simple is that! See the example below. Then, write your story on the next page.

*Example:* “Before coming to faith in Jesus Christ, I was **ME-CENTERED** and thought I was in control of my life. If I wanted something to happen (specifically, get a boyfriend!), I had to make it happen! My sisters came to faith before I did, and through them I saw a lack in my own life. When I heard an **EVANGELIST** on TV present the gospel, I realized what the lack was. It was a Person, Jesus Christ, and I prayed and asked Him to forgive my sins. Now, I am most blessed in relinquishing control to Him, **TRUSTING** Him with all my heart, leaning not on my own understanding, acknowledging Him in all my ways and allowing Him to straighten my paths.

*This activity is adapted from “Create Your Own 3-Word Testimony!” accessed at evantell.org.*
“Create Your Own 3-Word Faith Story”

For a worksheet to help you write a longer version of your faith story, see “My Faith Story Worksheet” at the end of this study guide. Two options to use. After you have finished, use the “Screen Your Language” ideas to check for “churchy” words. Pare your story down to 5 minutes, get together with some friends and share it. Woohoo!
Ministry Women—Identified by Service

Lesson 11: Lydia & Phoebe

Time: 49-60 AD Paul's Second & Third Missionary Journeys

Historical Perspective

Settlers first arrived in the area of Philippi from the off-coast island of Thasos to mine gold. A Greek gold rush, so to speak! Philip II of Macedon named the city after himself, built a wall, and colonized it in 356 BC. At the Battle of Philippi in 42 BC, Roman generals Mark Antony and Octavian defeated the army of Brutus (Et tu, Brute?) and Cassius. So, Philippi became a Roman colony as a thank you for its help. Being a Roman colony gave Philippi special privileges (such as few or no taxes), but more importantly it became like a "transplanted" Rome. The primary purpose of colonies was military, for the Roman leaders felt it wise to have Roman citizens and sympathizers settled in strategic locations. So, Octavian (who became Caesar Augustus) settled former soldiers there in the years following the victory.

Philippi was very influential in its part of Greece. Its 10,000-15,000 residents were mostly Greeks and Romans. Being only 10 miles from the coast, it was a great market for goods that Romans liked and was on a highway for easy transport. Main Street Philippi was the Egnatian Way, the Roman version of an interstate highway that connected Rome to all its satellite cities. Philippi was considered the Gateway to the East and, thus, a very prosperous place. What wouldn't be if you paid no taxes?! Also, it had exceptionally fertile soil and lots of timber for harvesting.

A school of medicine run by a guild of Greek physicians operated in Philippi. It is speculated that Luke (the author of Acts and the physician companion of Paul) had grown up and attended medical school there.

Being such a Roman city, Philippi had very few Jews, not enough to even establish a synagogue since doing so required at least 10 Jewish men. Without a synagogue present, the few Jews in any town and their Gentile converts met on the Sabbath outside the city walls, near water, to get away from idolatry. The women's prayer group Paul found probably gathered on the banks of the Gangites River, a mile and a half west of town.

Day One Study

Read the Historical Perspective in the box above, then...

1. Read Acts 15:40-16:5. List all that God was doing through the ministry of Paul and his companions. Note: "The decisions reached by the apostles and elders" in v. 4 refers back to the Acts 15 decision that the Gentiles didn't need to become Jews first in order to be saved.
2. Read Acts 16:6-9. How was the Holy Spirit directing their path? And, specifically describe the vision God gave to Paul to guide him over to Europe.

3. Read Acts 16:10-12. What did Paul and his companions do in response to the vision? [Notice the use of the pronoun “we” beginning in v. 10 indicating Luke was traveling with the group now.]

4. Read Acts 13:5, 14-15; 14:1 and 17:2, 10. What was Paul’s usual missionary strategy when he entered a town?

5. **Live Out His Love**: Did you notice Paul’s flexibility in how he followed the Lord’s leading on this journey? He had good plans to go to new places with the gospel, specifically the province of Asia (western Turkey) and Bithynia (northern Turkey). We, as women, often have our plans as to what we should do each day.

   - Read James 4:13-15 and Proverbs 16:3, 9. What is the balance between making plans and following God’s leading?

   - How will you submit to the Lord your daily plans and be open to whatever opportunities He gives you to build a relationship with someone who needs to know Him or to know Him better?
Day Two Study

**Getting to Know Lydia**

6. Read Acts 16:11-15. Paul had a vision of a man calling him over to Macedonia for ministry. To whom did God send Paul and his companions on this Sabbath day to proclaim the Gospel?

7. These women were gathered for Sabbath prayer just as Paul and his companions were. Gentiles who worshiped Israel's God were called “God-fearers” or “worshipers of God.” Read Acts 10:2; 13:43; 17:4,17; and 18:7.
   - Considering their culture, what choices were these “God-fearers” making?
   - Therefore, why do you think “God-fearers” were so open to the gospel of Jesus Christ?

*Scriptural Insight:* By this time in his ministry, Paul had been sharing the gospel with both men and women who embraced it with joy. Sadly, he also experienced persecution led by prominent “God-fearing” women in one city who had been incited by the Jews against him (Acts 13:50).

8. List everything you can glean about Lydia in this passage.

9. Read Acts 16:14 in several translations. What do you learn about Lydia's professional life?

10. The author of Acts made a point of saying that Lydia was from Thyatira. Research to find out what you can about Thyatira in first century AD—especially the people, businesses, and religion. This gives more background information about Lydia.
**Historical Insight:** Purple was a favorite color of the Romans and, therefore, in great demand because it was used on official togas in Rome and in the colonies. In fact, we still use the term "royal purple." It was very expensive to produce. We don’t know when or why Lydia relocated to Philippi, but it was a smart business move. Macedonian inscriptions show greater freedom for women in that area of the world than anywhere else at this time.

11. What was God doing while Paul was speaking? Reread the “Think About It” in Lesson 10 Day 1.

12. Who else was present and thus influenced by Lydia's becoming a believer and then being baptized right afterwards (verse 15)?

13. How did Lydia use her prosperity and home to further the spread of the Gospel in Philippi? See also Acts 16:40.

14. **Live Out His Love:** Paul may have expected some men gathering at the river, but he doesn’t act surprised. Instead, he is ready to share what he knows with the women gathered there. No doubt, he had some great conversation starters that led into sharing about Jesus. You can be ready for opportunities the Lord gives you through preparing some conversation transitions from common topics into sharing some aspect of your faith story.

Prepare some transitions from common topics of conversation that could lead into sharing some aspect of your faith story. Use the examples of common topics below and finish out what you would say.

- **Corruption, evil and sin** – “Though I am not guilty of that particular sin, I am just as guilty of...
✓ **Community** – “I believe we are created by God to live in real community, first of all with Him. And, I’ve experienced this…

✓ **Family** – “I am so glad God cares even more about my family than I do. What would I do without Him helping me to…

✓ **Something good happened** – “God has been so kind to you in that. I see His kindness to me every day…

✓ **High expectations** – “I am so glad God doesn’t expect perfection from me. What a relief it was for me to know…

✓ Other –

Ask Jesus to give you boldness and opportunity to use these soon. 😊

**Day Three Study**

15. Read Acts 16:16-40. The other incidents in Paul’s visit to Philippi no doubt had a direct effect on Lydia. Summarize what happened to Paul and his companions.

16. Put yourself in Lydia’s shoes as a woman. As a new Christian, hostess, and business woman, how might these events have affected Lydia?
17. Where was the last place Paul and his companions met in Philippi? In view of their notoriety, what does this tell us about Lydia?


19. Ten years later, Paul wrote a letter to the Philippian church. Read Philippians 1:3-8 and 4:14-19. How did Paul view this group of believers who began meeting in Lydia’s home? What kind of church had it become?


   - In what ways can hospitality be a great tool for ministry, particularly for building relationships with those who don’t know Christ or don’t know Him well?

   - In what creative ways can you make your home available?

   - Does hospitality have to be practiced in a home? Explain your answer.
Day Four Study

_Getting to Know Phoebe_

21. Read Romans 16:1-2 in at least 3 translations. From the limited amount of information in vv. 1-2, describe Phoebe. Also, do some research to discover the meaning of her name.

_From the Greek:_ Phoebe is described by Paul as a _diakonon_ of the church. The word _diakonon_, "servant," is used for the office of deacon (Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8,10,12) as well as used generally (Romans 15:8; 1 Corinthians 3:5). Use of the word with the phrase "of the church" strongly suggests some recognized position in the church at Cenchrea, a fact appropriate for a person serving as Paul's emissary. She was the emissary to deliver Paul's letter to the Romans.

Phoebe is also described by Paul as a _prostasis_, translated "great help/helper of many." The Greek word _prostasis_ means "a protectress, patroness." It is a word of dignity and indicates the high esteem with which she was regarded, as one who had been a protectress of MANY. The word was used as a title of a citizen in Athens, who had the responsibility of seeing to the welfare of resident aliens who were without civic rights. Among the Jews, it signified a wealthy patron of the community.

22. Knowing the meaning of the words Paul used to describe Phoebe gives you a great deal more insight into Phoebe's life.

- Look up _patroness_ in a dictionary.

- Now write a couple of sentences describing who this very real woman named Phoebe is.

23. So, what was Paul's view of this woman?
24. What did Paul ask of the Roman church on her behalf?

25. *Live Out His Love*: What can you learn from Phoebe’s example, especially in her example as a patroness? In what ways can you be a patroness for other believers?

26. Read Romans 16:3-15 in several translations to list the other women mentioned by Paul in Romans 16, including any information Paul gives us about them and their ministry to the church. In vv. 6 and 12, the Greek word translated "work hard" means "to labor with wearisome effort, to toil to the point of exhaustion."

27. Would you say that Paul demonstrated he had the same value for women as a follower of Christ that Jesus showed to women during His lifetime? Explain your answer.
**Historical Insight:** “Jesus gave women status and respect equal to men. Not only did He break with the anti-female culture of His era, but He set a standard for Christ-followers...Paul elevates women to a position of honor previously unknown in the world...As Christianity spread throughout the world, its redemptive effects elevated women and set them free in many ways. The Christian ethic declared equal worth and value for both men and women...As a result of Jesus Christ and His teachings, women in much of the world today, especially in the West, enjoy more privileges and rights than at any other time in history. It takes only a cursory trip to an Arab nation or to a Third World country to see how little freedom women have in countries where Christianity has had little or no presence. It’s the best thing that ever happened to women.” (Sue Bohlin, “Christianity: The Best Thing That Ever Happened to Women,” probe.org)

28. **Live Out His Love:** Read “Live Out His Love” below. At the end of your reading, come back here and reflect on these questions:

- Have you made the decision to follow Jesus as His disciple?
- Are you willing to live for Him as a disciple-maker in your sphere of influence?
- How will this look in your life?

**Live Out His Love**

Christianity is Christ! It is not a lifestyle or rules of conduct. Nor is it a society whose members are initiated by the sprinkling or covering of water. It is about Jesus Christ and our relationship with Him. We enter into that relationship by faith—faith in Him as the Son of God who lived a perfect life in a human body, died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins, and rose again from the dead with a new resurrection body so He could give us new life as well.

Jesus gives us a new life. The Apostle Paul described this “new life” relationship...

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20)

A 20th century Bible teacher simply put it this way:

“He gave His life for you so He could give His life to you, so He could live His life through you.” (Ian Thomas, The Saving Life of Christ)
The moment we accept this call to new life, God “clothes us” with Christ (Galatians 3:27). This means that when God looks on us, He sees His own Son. We become totally loved and accepted in God’s sight. Have you ever known what it is like to be totally loved and accepted by someone? What a fantastic experience!

We are given a new identity—“in Christ”—which comes with many new aspects of our relationship with God (complete forgiveness, peace, reconciliation with God, redemption from the power of sin in our lives, and a sure inheritance of eternal life that will never be taken away). Because of this new identity in Christ with Him living His life through us, we become the walking, talking, visible representatives of an invisible God as we are following Jesus in our lives.

We are individually given a two-fold purpose: 1) to follow Jesus as His disciple and 2) to live for Him as a disciplemaker.

1. To follow Jesus means to make the choice to learn from Jesus through what is taught in the Bible and, in dependent obedience, apply those teachings to your life. You will see Jesus living His life through you, influencing those around you so they can experience His love as well.

2. To live for Him as a disciplemaker means to make disciples for Him as He purposed us to do. His commission to His followers to share the good news about Him with others is given to everyday people like you and I are, to be fulfilled in the everyday world in which each of us “lives and moves and has our being” (Acts 17:28).

Thankfully, Jesus does not leave us alone to work really hard to do what He’s asked us to do. He empowers us to fulfill our purpose. The power comes from God’s Spirit who lives inside us from the moment we trust in Christ for salvation.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses… (Acts 1:8)

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us… (Ephesians 3:20)

Jesus calls us to a new life, clothes us with Himself, commissions us with a purpose and empowers us to fulfill that purpose.

Our response is to live dependently on His power in our lives…by faith. We are simply to obey Him and trust His Spirit in us to work through us. And, being a little scared is a good thing because we will rely on Him more. Feel free to say, “Lord Jesus, I can’t do this on my own. I will trust you to do this in me and through me.” Then, watch what He does!
Ministry Women—Identified by Service

Lesson 12: Priscilla

Time: 49-62 AD Paul's Second & Third Missionary Journeys

Historical Perspective

Many of the places Paul visited during his three long journeys were strategic centers of culture, commerce and communication. The Gospel planted in them would spread quickly to surrounding towns and villages and farther as travelers took the good news home with them. Four of the most important places Paul visited were Athens, Corinth, Ephesus and Rome.

Corinth, the city of shopkeepers, was Greece's most important trade city. It was two miles inland from the Gulf of Corinth at the foot of a ~2000 ft. rocky hill on top of which stood the temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love. Corinth was the connecting link between Rome, the capital of the world, and the East. It was filled with shops and had two theaters plus an amphitheater that hosted gladiatorial shows and athletics. The city was a melting pot of approximately 500,000 people who relished the freedom from moral restraints that prevailed in the city.

In Corinth, Paul joined Aquila and Priscilla as they worked on the same trade together—tent making. Tents were made of hand-woven strips of black or dark brown goat's hair about three feet wide sewn together and reinforced. Goat's hair is resistant to both heat and water, and once washed it shrinks and becomes taut. The skill of tent making was probably taught to Paul and Aquila in their youth. It was a Jewish tradition to teach young boys a trade. Additionally, Paul's native province of Cilicia was noted for its goat's-hair cloth called c
cilicium that was largely used in tent making.

Paul and his new friends left Corinth and traveled to Ephesus, the City of Artemis. Ephesus was also an important trading center at the junction of the Asiatic caravan route to the east and the sea route to Rome in the west. Paul left Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus and went to Caesarea. It is in Ephesus where Aquila and Priscilla met Apollos (Acts 18).

Sometime later we find Priscilla and Aquila back in Rome. They had lived in Rome previously until they were required to leave by Claudius. That is when they went to Corinth and met Paul. Rome was the capital of the empire, top ranking in political importance, geographical position and sheer magnificence. Located on the river Tiber around seven hills approximately 18 miles from the Mediterranean, Rome was full of temples, theaters, palaces, baths and administrative buildings. But in contrast to this lavish splendor, the ordinary people lived in tenements often three or four stories high. Many were so poorly built that they were nearly falling down. Picture the environment Paul, Aquila and Priscilla were in as you do your study and refer to the map in the lesson to track their journeys.

Excerpted from Handbook of Life in Bible Times and Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary.

Day One Study

Read the Historical Perspective in the box above, then…

2. How did the Corinthian Gentiles (Greeks) respond to the Gospel (vv. 7-11)?

3. Paul preached the Gospel successfully gaining converts for Jesus but not without opposition. How did God encourage Paul?

4. Describe Priscilla and her life situation using everything that is revealed in this passage.

**Historical Insight:** Displaced from Rome because of an edict in AD 49 or 50 from Claudius for all the Jews to leave Rome, Aquila and Priscilla had come to Corinth to ply their trade...Suetonius, a biographer of Roman emperors, described what may have been the occasion for such a decree. In his *Life of Claudius* he referred to the constant riots of the Jews at the instigation of Chrestus. Possibly, the name Chrestus is a reference to Christ. (Walvoord and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*, p. 405)

5. What brought Priscilla and her husband Aquila together with Paul? Approximately how long did Paul stay with them?

6. Describe what it would have been like for Priscilla and Aquila to have Paul as a daily companion, co-worker and influencer.
7. What kind of pressure do you think may have been brought to bear on Priscilla and Aquila because of their association with Paul? Consider the effect this could have had on their business and the choices they needed to make.

8. **Live Out His Love:** Have you ever had to take your stand for an unpopular cause that was right? What was the cost to you? What did you gain? Reflect on Acts 18:9-10 and let God speak to you through His Word.

9. **Live Out His Love:** Whether or not Priscilla and Aquila were Christians before they met Paul, they were certainly Christians by the time they left Corinth. And, knowing that Paul was willing to leave them in Ephesus to carry on ministry there tells us that Paul felt they were established in their faith. To establish means, “to build a solid foundation, to provide strong roots.” All Christians (new or old) need to be established in some basic information:

   - Who Christ is, what He’s done for us on the cross, what His resurrection means for us, and our identity (worth, self-image) in Christ.
   - How to read/study a Bible.
   - Who the Holy Spirit is and how He works in our lives
   - Living by the Spirit’s power rather than living by the flesh
   - What prayer is—knowing God the Father’s love
   - Obedience flowing from love and gratitude rather than obligation
   - Being part of the Body of Christ and enjoying its community
   - Telling others about Jesus

When you were a new or young believer, what did someone use to establish you? Did you go to a new believers’ class? Have you been rooted with this basic information? Of the list above, what do you feel that you still need to know?
Think About It: We prepare our children to know certain basics about who they are before we send them to kindergarten—their name, parents’ names, address, phone number, to obey and to share. Yet, we do not usually do the same for new Christians. When we invite a new Christian to church or to a small group, we assume those activities will fill in their gaps of understanding. But, unless a class, small group study, or sermon series is designed to give the basics of the faith in easily understandable language, those new believers may not get established. Those of us who are growing Christians need to help establish new and young believers get a good start in their life with Christ.

Day Two Study

10. Read Acts 18:18-23. What did Priscilla and Aquila do when Paul left Corinth (verse 18)? What does this tell you about her as a woman and them as a couple?

11. As Paul sailed for Syria, Ephesus was a stop on the way. What happened after they arrived in Ephesus? In what ways would staying in Ephesus be a step of faith for Priscilla?

12. Read Acts 18:24-28. What information is given about Apollos that Priscilla and Aquila would have also seen?

13. Discuss their response to Apollos, including their attitude and approach. What is the significance of the word "they" in verse 26?

15. **Live Out His Love:** Where are the new and undisciplled believers in your life? Most likely, they are where you are presently connected—Bible studies, mothers’ groups, where you work or live, and in your church. Don’t assume that woman sitting next to you knows her identity in Christ. She may not be a believer yet. She may be a new believer. She may be a long-time believer who has never been discipled and feels ignorant compared to others.

- Why is it important to come alongside someone who is new or lacking truth in her life rather than assuming she will “catch up” just by being in a group or attending church?

- Follow these key steps that reflect what Priscilla and her husband did for Apollos:

**Pay Attention** – Listen well to what she is saying. Is she new to your church or attending any church? Is she new to doing Bible study, hesitant to answer questions, lacking Bible familiarity, or revealing she is wanting to know God? Is she leaving questions unanswered in the study? Consider how you can help her.

**Come Alongside** – If she is new to attending church, studying the Bible for herself, or a new believer, she needs an established Christian woman to come alongside her.

- **Invite** her to join you for an hour sometime in the next week—early before work, during the day, after supper—doesn’t matter. Just find a time that works and do it.

- **Share** a little of your stories when you get together. Find out where she is in her walk of faith. If she’s not there yet, ask if you can share the gospel with her.

- **Offer to meet** with her for a few weeks (6-8) to help her get established in her faith walk. If she says, “Yes” …

- **Choose** a grace-oriented basic guide for new believers or new-to-the-Bible Christians to work through together. Make sure she has a good Bible. Let her ask you questions.

- **Depend** on Jesus’ power and leading to help you do it.

Ask Jesus to help you see the one needing you and to make you willing to be a “Priscilla” to her. Trust Him and invite her to get together with you this week and talk about it.

**Focus on the Meaning:** Does “pay attention” and come alongside her” sound like mentoring? Yes, it does. Mentoring is someone older in the Lord helping someone younger in the Lord understand and apply biblical truth to everyday life. It is the “how” of discipling.

Read “Alison’s Story” at the end of this lesson to see how this looked in the lives of three women.
Day Three Study

16. Read 1 Corinthians 16:19. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians from Ephesus, three years after first leaving Priscilla and Aquila there. He mentions Priscilla and Aquila in 16:19. What are they doing there?

17. Read Romans 16:3-5. Where were Priscilla and Aquila now? Based on what you know about them already, what were they likely doing there?

From the Greek: "Priscilla" had another name, Prisca (Romans 16:3; 1 Corinthians 16:19; 2 Timothy 4:19), the latter being more formal. Luke normally used the colloquial, diminutive form of names (e.g., Silas, Sopatros, Priscilla, Apollos), but Paul preferred their formal names in his writings (e.g., Silvanus, Sosipatros, Prisca, Epaphroditus). Nevertheless, he sometimes used the more popular form of a name (e.g., Apollos, Epaphras). (Dr. Constable's Notes on Acts, p. 261)

18. What might have Paul been referring to when he said "they risked their lives for me?" Refer back to previous questions.

19. Why should all the Gentile churches be grateful to them?

20. Read 2 Timothy 4:19. This is Paul's last letter written to his spiritual son, Timothy, who was pastoring the church at Ephesus. What does Paul's mention of Priscilla and Aquila tell us about them?
21. Aquila and Priscilla, as a married couple, worked together in their business and in their ministry. What joys and risks did they share?

*Historical Insight:* Priscilla's name frequently appears before her husband's—"Aquila"—in the New Testament (e.g., 18:18-19, 26; Rom. 16:3; 2 Tim. 4:19). This may indicate that she came from a higher social class than Aquila, or that others regarded her as superior to him in some respect. However, when first introduced in Acts 18:2, Luke mentioned Aquila first. (*Dr. Constable’s Notes on Acts, p. 261*)

22. *Live Out His Love:* Jesus did not send out His disciples to minister alone (Mark 6:7; Luke 10:1). With this in mind…

- If you are married, do you and your husband have common goals for ministry as a couple? If so, what are they? If not, how does the Lord want us to respond to each other and to Him?

- If you are not married, do you have a ministry partner in the church, workplace, community, women's group, or other? How are you at working together as a team with your ministry partner(s)? If you do not have a ministry partner, where do you get encouragement to do your ministry?

Day Four Study

*Recap of “Live Out His Love” Study*

23. Which account of women in the New Testament was your favorite? Why?

24. In what ways has this study increased your confidence that Jesus truly does care for women?
25. What choices have you made as a result of this study?

_Final Thoughts:_ Author Dorothy Sayers, a friend of C.S. Lewis, wrote this: “Perhaps it is no wonder that the women were first at the Cradle and last at the Cross. They had never known a man like this Man—there had never been such another. A prophet and teacher who never nagged at them, who never flattered or coaxed or patronized; who never made arch jokes about them, never treated them either as ‘The women, God help us!’ or ‘The ladies, God bless them!’; who rebuked without querulousness and praised without condescension; who took their questions and arguments seriously, who never mapped out their sphere for them, never urged them to be feminine or jeered at them for being female; who had no ax to grind and no uneasy male dignity to defend; who took them as he found them and was completely unselfconscious.”

(Dorothy L. Sayers, _Are Women Human?_ p. 47)
Allison’s Story: Coming Alongside Monica

My story is your story. It is a telling of making yourself available to God in the ordinary. However, when we make ourselves available to God and His agenda, what seems common becomes extraordinary. We serve a humble God who partakes in the “small” of our lives and writes the most beautiful stories.

I am a member of a newly planted church. At the time of my story, our church was on a tight budget. At one of our meetings, the pastor presented the budget and said that our church did not have the funds to pay a housekeeper. The meeting was held right after our church service that day, and many members and non-members were there. I raised my hand and said I would be willing to clean and try to set up a team to take care of this job once a week.

The next Sunday, two beautiful young ladies came up to me and asked if they could help me with the weekly cleaning. I had never laid eyes on either Monica or Ronda before and teased them about being ministering angels.

The following week, we met and talked a bit before we cleaned. I began to learn that neither of them had been attending a church for a while and that they lived together along with Monica’s boyfriend Mark. I shared my testimony with them and asked them about their faith journey and a bit about their background. That day as I was driving home, I realized this was about more than cleaning. The Lord had just laid into my hands the opportunity to disciple.

The pastor met with both Monica and her boyfriend Mark to encourage them to move out of their living arrangement. Mark attended our church alongside Monica and had come from a different church background.

Monica and I met after our cleaning time one week for coffee, and she asked me some questions about the Lord and her life. When I counseled her, she became agitated and said, “You sound just like my mother!” I told her I was a mother and tried to express to her how I cared. I wondered if this would change our relationship, but God had plans for Monica and me.

Ronda, the other young lady, leaned into our relationship a little more than Monica, and I thought maybe she was the one that God intended for me to spend more time in discipling. I did at first, but as time went on, circumstances took her to a job that made it hard to meet because of distance.

After about a year, our church budget was able to support a housekeeper, and we no longer needed to clean. By this time, Monica and I had become good friends. She was originally from another state, and I believe she eventually enjoyed the fact that I was like her mother. I saw her make great leaps by moving closer to her job and living with another roommate.

One Sunday, I noticed on Facebook that Monica had gone for a walk earlier that morning and expressed gratitude to God for her life. This was a new attitude for her. I had just been to a disciplemaking training event a few months earlier, and I felt the Holy Spirit prompt me to ask her if she would be willing to meet for a Bible study. As I walked out of the prayer room that Sunday morning, Monica was standing right there! I knew what that meant, so I asked her what she thought of meeting, and she said excitedly, “Yes!” She said she had wanted to do a study.

After praying and asking the Lord about this, during my first meeting with Monica, I asked her what she would enjoy doing during our meetings. She replied that she wanted to learn more about cooking. So, the first time we met, we roasted a chicken together!

We also chose a Bible study to do together that would give her a good foundation for her faith. I did my best to make the time and place easy for Monica because she lived forty minutes away. It
was such a joy to meet with her. At first, I could tell that she was developing a new habit of being
in the Word of God, and it was not always easy for her to make the time or feel confident about
the study. I was humbled when she would ask me questions. Sometimes I did not know the
answers, and I would tell her that I would do my best to find it out. We prayed about her job, her
family, and her boyfriend and thanked the Lord for putting us together. She really wanted to get
married, and I encouraged her to wait on the Lord and trust that He had His best in mind for her.

The trials would continue to come, and she would find herself seeking the Lord more. It was so
beautiful to watch. Mark, while visiting family, was taken to jail for an offense. He began to ask us
to pray about the outcome of this situation and the court case. The Lord had given my husband
and I a real heart for this young couple. The men at church prayed with Mark and graciously
guided him to a deeper dependence on God.

As months went by, Mark and Monica became like a new couple. They altered their time together
to be more productive instead of wasting time partying. They both were changing right before our
eyes. Monica began building relationships with several of the women at church and found support
through their examples and friendship. She even led an exercise program one night a week as an
outreach ministry.

We sometimes would just talk when we met. It wasn’t a forced or restricted time together. I felt
pressed to allow the Lord to work through our time for what He saw to be most important.
Sometimes we would walk her dog afterwards and just laugh and share.

Mark was put on probation, and he was concerned that he would have to serve it out in another
state where the offense was made. However, through prayer he received the good news that he
could stay at his job and home during the probation.

Soon after, he proposed to Monica! We continued to meet a few times, but job and wedding plans
took the front stage. My husband and I felt like surrogate parents at their wedding. It was so
special to be a part of this beautiful story!

Now that Monica is married, we don’t spend as much time together. She now works and lives a
good distance away. But I know that regardless of this, we will always be close at heart.

Monica has expressed that she feels a calling to reach out to young women and guide them in the
Lord. She is now beginning to be a leader and disciple others. Multiplication is the fruit of
discipling.

Monica and I met just a few days ago. She still has questions, dreams and hopes in which she
asks for guidance. I am humbled. God does use the ordinary.

As a side note, I do not hear from Ronda. I pray for her. I know God did not introduce me to her in
vain. Sometimes, we disciple, and the person moves out of our lives; sometimes they stay.
Sometimes our discipling seems disappointing and does not seem as successful as Monica’s
story. We have to trust that it is all in God’s hands and just remain available.
Ways to Explain the Gospel

Evantell.Org

Has anyone ever taken a Bible and shown you how you can know you’re going to heaven? May I?

The Bible contains both bad news and good news. The bad news is something about you and me, and the good news is something about God. Let’s discuss the bad news first.

- Bad News #1 — We are all sinners. Romans 3:23
- Bad News #2—The penalty for sin is death. Romans 6:23

Since there was no way you could come to God, the Bible says that God decided to come to you.

- Good News #1—Christ died for you. Romans 5:8
- Good News #2—You can be saved through faith in Christ. Ephesians 2:8-9

Is there anything keeping you from trusting Christ right now? Would you like to pray right now and tell God you are trusting His Son as your Savior?

You can watch a free online training video at http://evantell.org.

Bridge to Life (Navigators)

The Bible teaches that God loves all humans and wants them to know him. John 10:10; Romans 5:1

But humans have sinned against God and are separated from God and his love. Draw a chasm. This separation leads only to death and judgment. Romans 3:23; Isaiah 59:2

But there is a solution. Draw bridge. Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins (the bridge between humanity and God). 1 Peter 3:18; 1 Timothy 2:5; Romans 5:8

Only those who personally receive Jesus Christ into their lives, trusting him to forgive their sins, can cross this bridge. Everyone must decide individually whether to receive Christ. John 3:16; John 5:24
Four Spiritual Laws (Cru)

God loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life. *John 3:16; 10:10*

Humans are sinful and separated from God. Thus, they cannot know and experience God’s love and plan for their lives. *Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23*

Jesus Christ is God’s only provision for humanity’s sin. Through Jesus, you can know and experience God’s love and plan for your life. *Romans 5:8; John 14:6*

We must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and then we can know and experience God’s love and plan for our lives. *John 1:12; Ephesians 2:8-9*

You can access this online at www.godlife.com.

Using John 3:16

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

“Has anyone introduced you to Jesus so you could know Him? May I?”

**God loves**—God is real. He loves you with an unconditional, never-ending love. “**For God loves you ______ (name) so much...**” He created you to have a relationship with Him. But, we can’t experience this loving personal relationship because of sin in our lives. Sin is disobeying God. It puts a barrier between us and a holy God. No matter how hard you try, you cannot be good enough on your own to overcome this sin barrier. The penalty for sin is death. But God’s love had a plan...

**God gave**—“**God gave His one and only Son**” *Jesus* – to live as a human without sin and then to take the penalty for our sin on himself when he died on the cross. He was buried as a dead man then raised from the dead to be alive again. He did this so that our sins could be forgiven.

**We believe God’s love**—“**Whoever believes in Him**” – Faith is trust. God asks that we trust in His plan, admit our sin and desire for a relationship with Him. Accept what Jesus did on the cross for us out of love.

**We receive what God gave**—“**Shall not perish but have eternal life**” – Everyone dies and ends up somewhere. To perish means to die separated from God and His love for you. Eternal life means you can enjoy a forever-family relationship with God and promise of living securely with Him now and after your life on earth ends.

When offered a gift you want, you take it and say thank you. It’s forever yours. Is there anything keeping you from trusting in Jesus right now?
“My Faith Story” Worksheet Option 1
Specific Turning Point Leading to Salvation

Use this option:

✓ If you became a Christian as a teen or adult & remember what life was like before knowing Him.
✓ If you trusted Christ as a child, then drifted far away only to come back later in life, focus on what caused you to come back to Him and choose to be His disciple now.

Before I trusted in Christ

Although the tendency is to spend most of the time on your “before Christ” experience, only give enough information so the women know why you needed Christ in your life. Tell them what you needed so that some may identify with you.

1. Identify what your life was like. What were your attitudes, needs, and/or problems? From what did you get your security or happiness? How did those areas begin to disappoint you? To what source did you look for security, peace of mind, or happiness? In what ways were your activities unsatisfying?

2. Find 2-3 words to describe what only Christ could fill or do in your life (e.g. loneliness, feelings of insignificance, anger, rejection).

3. Briefly share a personal example that captures the needs and attitudes from this time of your life as identified above.

How you came to know Christ (point of salvation)

Share when and how you first heard the gospel and/or were exposed to Christianity. What brought you to the place of being willing to listen? Who influenced you? How and when did you decide to follow Jesus? Describe how you felt, what truths you heard, what you thought about them, how you felt after you made the decision. Give the gospel in this section. Use 1 or 2 relevant scripture verses.
My life after knowing Jesus

1. Spend the most time on this. What conditions in your life before Christ has now been satisfied by a relationship with Him? What does it look like in your life to have a relationship with Christ? How long did it take before you noticed changes? What are your blessings? Where do you struggle? How do you depend on Him through those struggles? What difference does having Him in your life make during those times? Emphasize what you have learned about God’s grace to you.

2. Briefly share a personal illustration that shows the wonderful difference that Christ has made in your life.

Wrap up by inviting them to trust in Christ as you did!

Write your five-minute faith story.

Whether you like to be spontaneous or need everything written down, it helps to script what you will say. It forces you to think through what you will say to maintain your main idea. It helps you to manage your allowed time. Write it as you would speak it—shorter sentences, peppy words that are clear and simple. Use everyday terminology. For example, instead of saying “my testimony,” say “the story of my life.” See “Screen Your Language” on page 115 for other alternatives. Include specific illustrations that give them snapshots of your life, not only general descriptions of your life events. Practice telling your story several times. Make eye contact with the listener to draw her into your story.

Write out your five-minute faith story. Remember only spend 30% of the time on your “before,” just enough to have them identify with your need at that time. Spend another 30% on the decision time, and spend the rest of the time on what knowing Christ has done for you. Always end by inviting them to join your adventure.
“My Faith Story” Worksheet Option 2
Believer to Christ-Follower (Disciple)

✓ Use this option if you became a Christian as a child and stayed faithful to Him through the years, choosing to become His disciple as a teen or adult.

Those who trust Christ as children often feel they "have nothing to tell" because they don’t have a dramatic story. Yet, your story is the one every parent wants for their children! For childhood believers, there occurs a later, mature decision to follow Christ as His disciple where more obvious life changes occurred. Therefore, focus on that later turning point in telling your story. Although the tendency is to spend most of the time on your “before” experience, only give enough information so the women know why you needed Christ in your life so they can identify with you.

Before I became Jesus’ disciple

1. Identify what your life was like as a young Christian or living as just a believer not a disciple. Share when and how you first heard the gospel and/or were exposed to Christianity. What were your attitudes, needs, and/or problems? From what did you get your security or happiness?

2. Briefly share a personal example that captures the needs and attitudes from this time of your life as identified above.

3. Although the tendency is to spend most of the time on your “before” experience, only give enough information so the women know why you needed to trust Christ more with your life.

What brought you to decide to become Jesus’ disciple

What brought you to the place of being willing to listen or of wanting to be more than just a believer? Who influenced you? How and when did you decide to be Jesus’ disciple? Describe how you felt, what truths you heard, what you thought about them, how you felt after you made the decision. Give the gospel in this section if you haven’t already done so in the previous section. Use 1 or 2 relevant scripture verses that God used to draw you to Himself. Emphasize what you have learned about God’s grace to you.
My life after becoming Jesus’ disciple

1. Spend the most time on this. What conditions before this time has now been satisfied by a deeper relationship with Him? How long did it take before you noticed changes? What does it look like in your life to have this closer relationship with Christ? What are your blessings? Where do you struggle? How do you depend on Him through those struggles? What difference does having Him in your life make during those times? What remarkable thing has Jesus done in your life (or in the last three years)?

2. Briefly share a personal illustration that shows the wonderful difference that following Christ has made in your life.

Wrap up by inviting them to trust in Christ as you did!

Write your five-minute faith story.

Whether you like to be spontaneous or need everything written down, it helps to script what you will say. It forces you to think through what you will say to maintain your main idea. It helps you to manage your allowed time. Write it as you would speak it—shorter sentences, peppy words that are clear and simple. Use everyday terminology. For example, instead of saying “my testimony,” say “the story of my life.” See “Screen Your Language” on page 115 for other alternatives. Include specific illustrations that give them snapshots of your life, not only general descriptions of your life events. Practice telling your story several times. Make eye contact with the listener to draw her into your story.

Write out your five-minute faith story. Remember only spend 30% of the time on your “before,” just enough to have them identify with your need at that time. Spend another 30% on the decision time, and spend the rest of the time on what knowing Christ has done for you. Always end by inviting them to join your adventure.
Screen Your Language

The following is taken from Stonecroft Speaker Workshop, sponsored by Stonecroft Ministries.

Unlearning the Lingo

Many of the words we use to share our faith may be meaningless, too churchy or clichéd to the people we’re attempting to reach. If you were an unbeliever, would you understand the following? (Note: Common Christian clichés are underlined.)

I heard the plan of salvation and was told that I needed to be saved. So, I went forward to be born again. The Lord spoke to me and then opened the door of my heart to show me God’s plan for my life. I learned to stand on God’s word and began to walk with the Lord. I turned away from worldly things, and it has been such a blessing.

Instead of these clichés (left), what could you say (alternatives on the right)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cliché</th>
<th>Alternative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scripture or Bible verse</td>
<td>A place in the Bible where it says…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believe</td>
<td>Trust, accept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born again, converted</td>
<td>Changed, transformed (with explanation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Follower of Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confess</td>
<td>Admit, agree with God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Found the Lord, got saved</td>
<td>Accept Christ make a decision to follow Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>God’s totally unearned forgiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gospel</td>
<td>God loves us and sent His Son so that we can find forgiveness and new life through Him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a burden</td>
<td>Be concerned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know</td>
<td>Believe, trust, be certain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lord</td>
<td>God, Creator, Jesus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Holy Spirit</td>
<td>God’s Spirit, the Spirit of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praise</td>
<td>Thanking God for His greatness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pray</td>
<td>Talk with God, ask God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preach</td>
<td>Talk about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repent</td>
<td>To be sorry about wrongs and to turn from them to do right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation, saved</td>
<td>Forgiven of wrongs and given eternal life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savior</td>
<td>Jesus, God’s Son, who forgave my wrongs and gave me eternal life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share</td>
<td>Discuss, explain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sin, sinner</td>
<td>Acting against God’s will and offending God’s character; the wrong things that we do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testimony</td>
<td>Telling my story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Witness</td>
<td>Tell, show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship</td>
<td>Giving honor and glory to God</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other commonly used “churchy” terms also could be baffling to a nonbeliever. What could you use instead of the following:

- Into my heart—
- Lord of my life—
- Rely on the Lord—
- Raised in a Christian home—
- The Lord told me/spoke to me/directed me—
- Total surrender—

In most cases, you may want to avoid using theological words such as justification or the sovereignty of God unless you explain them well.

If you are praying with nonbelievers present, even with believers, be careful how often you address God by name in prayer. Prayer is simply talking to God. In normal speech, you wouldn’t continually repeat someone’s name, but many Christians think it necessary to mention God’s name after every five words or so. This is disconcerting to non-Christians. Write out your prayer if this is a temptation for you.

Above all, be real and be normal.

Avoid Inappropriate Information

Be cautious about using these in your faith story.

- Use discretion in naming religions, churches, denominations, or cults.
- Controversial issues such as doctrinal, political and social issues.
- Derogatory remarks relating to any person, place, group, or issue.
- Promoting any project, campaign, business, cause, or financial need.
- If you refer to any person, especially family members, could this cause embarrassment or conflict?
Small Group Discussion Guide

Introduction

☑ Use an icebreaker to get to know one another, especially something that they might share as women. Example: what activities do you enjoy? Avoid talking about families on the first day if you have some who are single and/or without children.

☑ Skim through the “Using This Study Guide” section.

☑ Cover the “Discussion Group Guidelines.”

☑ Read the “New Testament Insights” and “New Testament Summary” sections, especially for those not familiar with the Bible.

☑ Point out “Israel’s Leaders” chart for future reference.

☑ Read through the “Live Out His Love” section and discuss.

LESSON 1: A SAMARITAN WOMAN

Pray for the Holy Spirit to give each woman insight and teach her something from His Word today.

Day One

☑ Read “Historical Perspective.” Anything new to you?

☑ Questions 1-4.

Day Two Study


Day Three Study

☑ Questions 9-12.

Day Four Study


☑ Question 16. Read and let the women know to talk with you if this is on their heart.

☑ Table Talk: Break up into groups of 3-4 to discuss Question 17. After 5-10 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.

☑ Question 18.
LESSON 2: AN IMMORAL WOMAN

Pray for the Holy Spirit to give each woman insight and teach her something from His Word today.

Day One
✓ Comments on “Historical Perspective.”
✓ Questions 1-4.

Day Two Study

Day Three Study
✓ Questions 9-14.
✓ Read John 17:15-20. Cover Question 15 first bullet point.
✓ Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover Question 15 second part. After 5-10 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.

Day Four Study
✓ Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover Question 20. After 5-10 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.
✓ Read paragraph at top of page 21. Ask for comments about Tammy’s story. Does anyone have a similar story to share?
LESSON 3: AN ADULTEROUS WOMAN

Pray for the Holy Spirit to give each woman insight and teach her something from His Word today.

Day One
✓ Ask for comments on “Historical Perspective.”
✓ Questions 1-8.

Day Two Study

Day Three Study
✓ Questions 16-19.
✓ Question 21. Ask for comments on “Greener-Grass Syndrome.”

Day Four Study
✓ Questions 22-23.
✓ Question 24. Read Hebrews 4:14-16.
✓ Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover Question 25. After 5-10 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.
LESSON 4: A SICK WOMAN & A DEAD GIRL

Pray for the Holy Spirit to give each woman insight and teach her something from His Word today.

Day One
✓ Ask for comments on “Historical Perspective."
✓ Question 1.
✓ Question 2. Read Mark 5:21-34.
✓ Questions 3-4.

Day Two Study
✓ Questions 5-9.
✓ Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover Question 10. After 5-10 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.

Day Three Study
✓ Questions 11-19.
✓ Question 20. Talk about how hard it is to wait and keep believing.

Day Four Study
✓ Questions 21.
✓ Question 22, first bullet point. Cover together in large group.
✓ Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover the rest of Question 22. After 5-10 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.
✓ Ask for comments on “Jesus, A Personal God.”
LESSON 4: A SICK WOMAN & A DEAD GIRL

Pray for the Holy Spirit to give each woman insight and teach her something from His Word today.

**Day One**
- ✓ Ask for comments on "Historical Perspective."
- ✓ Question 1.
- ✓ Question 2. Read Mark 5:21-34.
- ✓ Questions 3-4.

**Day Two Study**
- ✓ Questions 5-9.
- ✓ Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover Question 10. After 5-10 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.

**Day Three Study**
- ✓ Questions 11-19.
- ✓ Question 20. Talk about how hard it is to wait and keep believing.

**Day Four Study**
- ✓ Questions 21.
- ✓ Question 22, first bullet point. Cover together in large group.
- ✓ Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover the rest of Question 22. After 5-10 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.
- ✓ Ask for comments on “Jesus, A Personal God.”
LESSON 5: A CANAANITE & A CRIPPLED WOMAN

Pray for the Holy Spirit to give each woman insight and teach her something from His Word today.

**Day One**
- Ask for comments on “Historical Perspective.”
- Question 1.
- Question 2. Read Mark 7:24-30.
- Questions 3-8.

**Day Two Study**
- Question 14. Talk about ideas that help you remember to pray.
- Discuss the purpose for miracles.

**Day Three Study**
- Question 15.
- Questions 17-20.

**Day Four Study**
- Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover Question 25. After 5-10 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.
LESSON 6: WIDOW OF NAIN

Pray for the Holy Spirit to give each woman insight and teach her something from His Word today.

**Day One**
- ✓ Ask for comments on “Historical Perspective.”
- ✓ Summarize Question 1.
- ✓ Questions 2-4.

**Day Two Study**
- ✓ Questions 6-9.
- ✓ Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover Question 10. After 5-10 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.

**Day Three Study**
- ✓ Questions 11-12.
- ✓ Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover Question 16. After 5-10 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.

**Day Four Study**
- ✓ Questions 17-18.
- ✓ Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover Question 19. After 5-10 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.
Pray for the Holy Spirit to give each woman insight and teach her something from His Word today.

**Day One**
- ✓ Ask for comments on “Historical Perspective.”
- ✓ Questions 2-7.

**Day Two Study**
- ✓ Questions 10-14.
- ✓ Questions 16-17.

**Day Three Study**
- ✓ Questions 18-19.

**Day Four Study**
- ✓ Questions 27-29.
- ✓ Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover Question 30. After 5-10 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.
LESSON 8: MARY MAGDALENE

Pray for the Holy Spirit to give each woman insight and teach her something from His Word today.

**Day One**
- ✓ Ask for comments on “Historical Perspective.”
- ✓ Questions 2-5. Point out that contrary to what might have been construed in that culture, these women were not serving as prostitutes for the men.

**Day Two Study**
- ✓ Questions 6-10.

**Day Three Study**
- ✓ Questions 11-14.
- ✓ Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover Question 15. After 5-10 minutes, switch groups and do it again. Ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.

**Day Four Study**
- ✓ Questions 17-19.
- ✓ Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover Question 20. After 5-10 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.
Lesson 8: Mary Magdalene

Pray for the Holy Spirit to give each woman insight and teach her something from His Word today.

**Day One**
- Ask for comments on “Historical Perspective.”
- Questions 2-5. Point out that contrary to what might have been construed in that culture, these women were not serving as prostitutes for the men.

**Day Two Study**
- Questions 6-10.

**Day Three Study**
- Questions 11-14.
- Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover Question 15. After 5-10 minutes, switch groups and do it again. Ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.

**Day Four Study**
- Questions 17-19.
- Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover Question 20. After 5-10 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.
LESSON 9: MARY, JESUS’ MOM

Pray for the Holy Spirit to give each woman insight and teach her something from His Word today. Remind everyone to be sensitive to each other’s background concerning Mary. Focus on the Scriptures.

Day One
✓ Ask for comments on “Historical Perspective.”
✓ Questions 2-8.
✓ Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover Question 9. After 5-10 minutes, switch groups and do it again. Ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.

Day Two Study
✓ Question 10. Read Matthew 1:18-25.
✓ Questions 11-17.
✓ Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover Question 18. After 5-10 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.

Day Three Study
✓ Questions 20-23.

Day Four Study
✓ Question 30. Discuss Mary’s character qualities that you’d like to have as well.
Pray for the Holy Spirit to give each woman insight and teach her something from His Word today.

**Day One**

☑ Ask for comments on “Historical Perspective.”
☑ Questions 1-2. Skim
☑ Questions 3-4. Talk about how Jesus prepared His disciples.
☑ Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover Question 7. After 5-10 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.

**Day Two Study**

☑ Question 9.
☑ Question 12.

**Day Three Study**

☑ Questions 14-18.
☑ Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover Question 19. After 5-10 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.

**Day Four Study**

☑ Question 20.
☑ Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover Question 21. Tell the women not to ask questions in the middle of each woman’s sharing her story. Wait until after she is finished. After 5-10 minutes, switch groups and do it again. Ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.
LESSON 11: LYDIA & PHOEBE

Pray for the Holy Spirit to give each woman insight and teach her something from His Word today.

Day One
✓ Ask for comments on “Historical Perspective.”
✓ Questions 1-5.

Day Two Study
✓ Questions 7-13.
✓ Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover Question 14. Ask for a leader at each table to keep everyone on task. After 10-15 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.

Day Three Study
✓ Questions 16-19.
✓ Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover Question 20. After 5-10 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.

Day Four Study
✓ Questions 22-27.
✓ Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover Question 28. After 5-10 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.
LESSON 12: PRISCILLA

Pray for the Holy Spirit to give each woman insight and teach her something from His Word today.

**Day One**
- ✓ Ask for comments on “Historical Perspective.”
- ✓ Questions 2-8.
- ✓ Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover Question 9. After 5-10 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.

**Day Two Study**
- ✓ Questions 11-14.
- ✓ Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover Question 20. After 5-10 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.
- ✓ Ask for comments on “Allison's Story.”

**Day Three Study**
- ✓ Question 16.
- ✓ Question 17. Read Romans 16:3-4.
- ✓ Questions 18-23.
- ✓ Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover Question 24. After 5-10 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.

**Day Four Study**
- ✓ Questions 25-27.
Sources

The following resources were used in the preparation and writing of this study.

5. Dr. Tom Constable’s Notes on Acts accessed at www.soniclight.com
6. Melanie Newton, Lifestyle Disciplemaking Training
7. Jesus Cares for Women by Helene Ashker, Navigator Press.
8. Vickie Kraft teaching notes on New Testament women
9. Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary
10. New Unger’s Bible Dictionary
11. Handbook of Life in Bible Times
Graceful Beginnings Series

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LIVE OUT HIS LOVE

Jesus Christ treated women as no man had ever treated them before. He taught, forgave, accepted, and gave new life to them. Because His compassion for them was so countercultural to what they had previously known, women responded with love for Him and a desire to serve Him. They also shared His love with others who could then benefit from Jesus’ great love for women as well. Jesus Christ entered into the midst of their lives, visibly representing God to them, loving them dearly, and changing their lives forever! He does the same for you and me today.

Today, many women like you and I are longing for more direction in our walks of faith than attending a weekly Bible study and the annual Christmas brunch. That longing is a desire put in our hearts by God’s Spirit to fulfill the purpose we have while on earth serving the Lord Jesus in our daily lives. That purpose is to live for Him, experience His love for us, and share His love with others around us.

Journey alongside some New Testament women as they experienced His love and care for them—the same love and care He offers to every woman today. Just relax, trust in Him, and begin an adventure that will transform your life and others as well.

Experience & share the compassion of Jesus for women.

Are you ready for adventure?

JOYFUL WALK BIBLE STUDIES

Joyful Walk Bible Studies are grace-based studies for women of all ages. Each study guide follows the inductive method of Bible study (observation, interpretation, application) in a warm and inviting format. So, grab a cup of coffee, your Bible, and some friends as you explore God’s Word together.

Melanie Newton is a speaker, author, and trainer with Joyful Walk Ministries. She is the author of Graceful Beginnings books for anyone new to the Bible and Joyful Walk Bible Studies for established Christians.

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